THE ESTABLISHMENT AND DEVELOPMENT OF BRITISH ADMINISTRATION IN THE NIGER DELTA WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO THE WORK AND LETTERS OF C.M.MACDONALD 1889-1895

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ABSTRACT

Chapter one examines the reasons for the establishment of a British protectorate over the Lower Niger in 1885, and the placing of part of the Protectorate under the administration of a Chartered Company, leaving the other part under a Consul. In chapter two the early career of Macdonald is examined providing the necessary personal background to the central figure in the work.

The years 1886-9 saw the breakdown of consular administration in the Niger Delta, accusations against the Company's administration, and government policy of extending the Charter over the coastal region coming under increasing attack. Doubts as to the future government of the area, and German pressure, caused Britain to appoint a commissioner to make a comprehensive enquiry in a bid to settle all problems (chapter three). The enquiry conducted by Macdonald and its results are discussed in chapter four. Chapters five and six deal with the mechanics of the new administration for the coastal region. Chapters seven, eight and nine look at the administration's policy towards trade and the missions; its attempts at hinterland penetration as part of the process of civilisation; and its relations with its neighbours during a

period of general progress up to 1894. During the latter part of 1894 and throughout 1895 the administration went through a series of political crises which determined the government after enquiry to establish a greater control over its functions. A resurgence of enthusiasm at the Colonial Office for ruling subject peoples meant that greater control took the form of a more orthodox colonial administration which passed from the purview of the Foreign Office in 1900 (chapter ten). The conclusion assesses Macdonald the person, the significance of his report, and the administration emerging from it.

CONTENTS

LIST OF MAPS & ABBREVIATIONS

(At end of volume)

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

A.P.S.	Aborigines Protection Society
C.M.S.	Church Missionary Society
C.O.	Colonial Office
F.O.	Foreign Office
F.O.C.P.	Foreign Office Confidential Print
J.Af.Soc.	Journal of the Africa Society
J.A.H.	Journal of African History
J.H.S.N.	Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria
N.C.P.	Niger Coast Protectorate
O.R.P.	Oil Rivers Protectorate
P.P.	Private Papers
R.N.C.	Royal Niger Company
T.	Treasury
U.P.	United Presbyterian Mission.

INTRODUCTION

"No part of history is more difficult to record intelligibly than administration" (Margery Perham, Lugard Vol.2 p.138).

During the course of writing this thesis I have found no cause to dissent from Miss Perham's verdict. Indeed the opposite is the case. As time has progressed, I have become increasingly aware how much more difficult it is to record good administration which, unlike bad, has no advertisement and therefore apparently no history. My problems do not finish here. I am well aware that the number of people is small to whom the name Macdonald has any meaning whatever. Goldie, Johnston and Lugard have had their biographers; Macdonald does not even merit an article in a learned journal. His death in 1915 went unnoticed at any government level amidst the toils of war; there was a brief obituary in The Times - that was all. Macdonald, unlike Johnston, was no writer, and left no testament by which posterity may judge his acts. To all intents and purposes his name sank without trace amongst the myriad of British administrators who plagued the coasts of Africa during the later part of the nineteenth century.

Why resuscitate it? Mainly because of a growing conviction that here was a man worthy to take his place alongside the greatest of the nineteenth century imperialist diplomatists. On three separate occasions when international events blazed across the national scene, Macdonald was at the centre of affairs. In China, when the Boxers rose against European influence, it was Macdonald who led the defence of the legations; in Japan, when England ended her period of diplomatic isolation by signing the alliance of 1902, it was Macdonald who was the ambassador. Each of these tales would be well worth the telling from a biographical point of view. It is, however, with the third of such occasions, and the first in time, that this book is concerned.

In 1885 Britain declared a protectorate over the Lower Niger and handed over a portion of that territory to the Royal Niger Company under charter to administer. The other portion (the coastal area) was placed under the temporary administration of a consul, pending an arrangement between the Company and independent traders to enable the Charter to be extended over the whole Protectorate. The basic assumption on the part of government was that the Charter would be extended as a way of meeting imperial responsibilities at minimum cost.

In 1889 German pressure and a chaotic political situation in the coastal area known as the Oil Rivers forced an investigation into the way the Niger Company exercised its powers of government and the mode by which the Oil Rivers might be administered. The investigator, Macdonald, produced a report which not only prevented the extension of the Charter, but shook the faith of the British Government completely in Company administration. Macdonald was paid the high compliment of being asked to implement his recommendations and administer the portion of the Protectorate left outside Company rule, and the result was a highly successful empirical administration which, briefly, before being absorbed by the Colonial Office, provided a model for the government of semi-independent communities in the tropics.

Macdonald's previous career in the army, as military attaché in Egypt to first Malet and then to Baring from 1882 to 1887, and as Acting Consul General at Zanzibar for nearly a year, provide one background in which this study is set. The other background is the steady growth of British trade and influence in the Bights of Benin and Biafra from the seventeenth century up to the establishment of the Protectorate in 1885. In 1889 the two backgrounds merge and the study becomes an integrated whole. What is then attempted is an administrative

study of the beginnings of British rule in what was later to become a part of Southern Nigeria. In this study, in which the mechanics of government are very much to the fore, one figure by virtue of his position and personality assumes a central role.

There are two published works in which Macdonald is more than a name. It was Dr. John Flint who in his book Sir George Goldie and the Making of Nigeria (London 1960) first brought the Macdonald Report to the light of day after over sixty years of obscurity, and revealed its importance as "the only source in existence which can show us what Goldie's company really did on the Niger, and what its presence meant to the people who lived there" (p.130). Flint, however, is concerned mainly with the effect of the report on the Niger Company and those aspects which touched on Goldie: with the Oil Rivers side of the Report he hardly deals, except in so far as it involved the collapse of the plan for charter extension. Since the mechanics of Company rule on the Niger-Benue are peripheral to my study, I have touched on this aspect lightly, but I have indicated that I interpret Macdonald to be far more critical of Company rule than Flint suggests, and that his criticisms not only governed but pointed to the type of future administration in the Oil Rivers. I have also examined

the Company's treaty rights in the delta, since these had a bearing on boundaries with the Macdonald administration. The Oil Rivers part of the investigation is given the fullest treatment in Chapter IV of my thesis; and it is on this part of the report that I think the emphasis ought to lie.

After the collapse of plans to extend the Charter, the ways of Company and Oil Rivers drifted apart. To me, a key linking factor in the years after 1891 is the antagonism of Goldie and Macdonald. The relationships between Company and Consul I have examined in Chapter IX. On the Brass affair in 1895, Dr. Flint's path and mine again cross; for this I make no apology, as our interpretations of the events in some aspects differ.

The other work in which Macdonald figures to some degree is that by the late J.C.Anene - Southern Nigeria in Transition 1885-1906 (Cambridge 1966). The period when Macdonald was Consul General is treated as a small part of an everchanging kaleidoscope, in which the key factors are the overthrow of indigenous authority extending over a period of twenty years, and the impact of British rule on traditional institutions. In Anene's own words he is "attempting to analyse the structure of an indigenous society" and how "British rule unleashed forces which almost completely transformed the social and economic life of the peoples of Southern Nigeria"

(Preface pp.IX and X). I can make no claims in these directions. My canvas is smaller, my time scale more concentrated. In a sense I would like to feel that my work is complementary to Anene's - he makes no attempt to examine the bones of British administration, the workings of customs, treasury, post office etc., while I regard the question of impact on the indigenous peoples as important, but beyond the scope of my present work, except in so far as the administration was forced to change its views about administration.

In putting forward this last statement I must emphasise that I am, in no way, attempting to decry the importance of works analysing what Africans thought about Europeans and how they reacted to European government. The sort of studies produced, for instance, by Leonard Thompson and Monica Wilson in South Africa, Roland Oliver in East Africa, and the Ibadan history school for West Africa are long overdue. But I do believe that one ignores what Europeans thought about Africa at one's peril. Thesis and antithesis provide the necessary synthesis for a broad and balanced view of African history. Herein lies my defence and justification for the present work. If my concern seems overmuch with European matters in an essentially African field, it is not only because I believe that that is where, what competence I have, lies, it

is also because I believe that administrative studies - that is, actually what the European did to govern when he got to Africa--have been all too much neglected in the past. It was not until 1969 in fact that the first scholarly administrative analysis of Nigeria as a whole was published. But I.F.Nicholson in The Administration of Nigeria (Oxford 1969) takes as his starting point the year 1900. I hope to show that an administration did exist in at least part of the area under discussion before then.

If this work is mainly concerned with an administration and how it came into being, it is not quite the whole story. Nor is the central personality of Macdonald. An attempt is made to put flesh on the bones by recapturing some of the characters of the people who ruled, and the atmosphere in which they lived. What was life like for a European in the Niger Delta before the turn of the century? Much more could be said on this score, but to do so would take us beyond the limits imposed by a thesis. Again, the administration within the limits imposed by the Foreign Office carried on its own rudimentary 'foreign' policy with its neighbours. In this context Macdonald's visits to Berlin established him as a diplomat. The Protectorate had a distinct commercial policy. All these aspects are examined in the limited space available and an attempt made to paint a picture of an embryonic but integrated government. Binding all

together was Macdonald, who in twenty years travelled from Captain in Her Majesty's army to a senior ambassadorship and the Privy Council. Despite its problems I feel, therefore, that this work was worth the labour, and hope that in a modest way it will prove a distinct contribution to the knowledge of the early years of British rule in Nigeria.

Two further points need to be made. Ill health and the political situation in Nigeria prevented me from undertaking field-work in the Eastern Delta during 1969. Disappointing though this was, it did not prove crippling. Archival material in Nigeria on the British administration before 1896 is limited (with the exception of that relating to Lagos). Nearly all of what there is, for example, dispatches to and from consuls, is duplicated in the Public Record Office, London, which also contains the more illuminating minutes of the government officials. In the National Archives at Ibadan are a few documents in the Cal. Prof. Series particularly under heads 6 to 10 containing district reports and minutes on special subjects relating to the Macdonald administration not in the Public Record Office. Thanks to the good offices of friends in Nigeria, I am aware of the contents of these.

The second point is one of terminology. As far as names are concerned, I have tried to maintain some consistency in spelling, even where administrators were at their most

perverse. I have tended to use the generally accepted Nigerian official English terms for African people e.g. 'Urhobo' for 'Sobo' except, of course, when quoting. For place names I have adhered to the European designations as being for the most part more recognisable on a modern map e.g. Bonny, Brass, Opobo etc. A word is needed as to my use of the term 'Protectorate'. Unless the text indicates otherwise, 'protectorate' refers only to the administration under Macdonald. The area under the Niger Company I call the 'Company's territories' or, as it was known after 1893, the 'Niger Territories'. This use is purely a matter of convenience to avoid confusion, as I am aware it is not strictly correct. Up to 1893 the Company and Consular administrations together constituted the Protectorate. After 1893 all territories within the whole Protectorate, not ruled by the Company, were put under Macdonald and received the legal title 'Niger Coast Protectorate'. The title 'Oil Rivers Protectorate' used by officials before that date had no legal force whatever.

Naturally in writing this week I have some debts to acknowledge. The major quarry for this thesis was the Public Record Office in London. The bibliography indicates the extent to which the records there were used. For access to these my thanks are due to the officers and attendants who work there with such commendable efficiency in such miserable surroundings.

Quotations from Crown Copy-right records appear by kind permission of the Controller of H.M. Stationery Office. I have to thank also the British Consuls at Bonn and The Hague for exertions on my behalf which enabled me to see, on the one hand, the captured German documents relating to the Cameroons, and on the other to collect information on the Dutch liquor traffic to the Protectorate; the Librarians of the Church Missionary Society, Lambeth Palace, and the National Library of Scotland, for permission to see various mission records; the Warden and Librarian of Rhodes House, Oxford, for access to the Niger Company Papers, the Aborigines Protection Society Papers, and the Lugard Papers; the Librarian of the Brown, Picton and Hornby Libraries, Liverpool, for access to odd papers by Macdonald and relating to him; John Holt and Company, Liverpool, for permission to see and quote from the Holt papers; and Lord Salisbury, for permission to see and quote from the private papers of the Third Marquis.

Finally it is with very great pleasure that I record my thanks to those personal friends without whose prodding and support this work would never have been undertaken in the first place and who ensured that the end product is rather less poor than it might have been: my friends in Nigeria, too numerous to mention by name, who have undertaken labours on my behalf in

that trouble torn country at considerable inconvenience to themselves; Dr. John Flint for much helpful criticism and advice, for permission to quote from 'Goldie', and for the initial suggestion that my youthful labours might be profitably expended in a study of Macdonald; Professor Roland Oliver who supervised my research, providing me along the way with a plenitude of useful suggestions and advice; and Mr. and Mrs. P.J. Pinkney and Miss D.M. Barron who underwent long hours for little reward at the typewriter, and who took me to task for certain enormities of English. My last and greatest acknowledgment is to my mother and father, who by steadfast counsel and ready encouragement bred in me the will and determination to complete this task. The debt, I owe to them, is beyond repayment.

CHAPTER ONE

THE BIRTH OF A PROTECTORATE

Axiomatic in West African history is the intimate connection between trade and politics. It was the understanding of this which made Africans wish to keep European traders at a distance, insisting on their own role as middlemen, from the fifteenth to the eighteenth century. It was the understanding of this which caused Europeans increasingly to interfere in the internal politics of African states during the nineteenth century. To understand why Europe, and Britain in particular, came to the conclusion that without political power trade could not flourish, it is necessary to examine briefly the activities of traders on the Bights of Benin and Biafra, and the attitude of the British government towards their interests.

Until the great sugar boom of the 1630's in the West Indies, trade, and therefore contact, with the West Coast had been intermittent. The demand for slaves, which the growth of that industry implied, had revolutionised the situation. The slave trade was the key to the Atlantic triangle, which in turn was the centre of the old mercantile system. At its height in the eighteenth century, some 70,000 to 80,000 people per year were transported across the Atlantic.[1]

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1. Figures given in C. Lloyd, The Navy and the Slave Trade, 1944.

Despite the crucial importance of the slave trade, government saw no need to ensure supply by annexing large areas of territory. Rather, since slavery was indigenous to the West Coast, it was felt to be far better to leave well alone and merely tap the sources of supply, the more so as the African states on the coast were willing and able to adapt themselves as middlemen. Armed with European weapons, the coastal states were able to ensure regular supplies to the slavers from the interior. There was no incentive to alter a system which, in addition to being cheap, kept the Europeans from too close or too long a contact with the deadly fever-ridden swamps of the Niger Delta area.

That peculiar blend of evangelical fervour and cold commercial amorality which produced a revolution in politics in Britain during the early part of the nineteenth century was to have a profound effect on the West Coast. The abolition of the slave trade in 1807 was not merely a disastrous blow to the Liverpool merchants, in whose hands the lion's share of the slave trade of the Niger region had been concentrated, it necessitated the development of alternative trade products if trade was not to cease. To facilitate the growth of legitimate commerce and the suppression of slavery presupposed a certain amount of interference in African societies, which had to be educated to the change.

A pattern of direct interference was, however, slow to develop. This was mainly because coincidence had ensured that a new natural product, palm oil, was at hand to take the place of the old trade in slaves. Palm oil, as an agent in the manufacture of soap, became increasingly important as, with the industrial revolution in Europe, came changes in social customs and economic wants. Washing was recognized as a vital factor to health, the moving parts of machinery needed lubrication. The Liverpool traders seized the opportunity to get back in big business, and progress on the coast was rapid. In 1808 less than 200 tons of oil had been shipped to Liverpool; by 1834 the figure was more than 14,000 tons.[1]

If, however, the change in cargoes had been so easily made from the British end, it produced no revolution in Africa. Once the incomprehensible British had made it clear that they would no longer buy humans, but were instead very interested in the fruit of a particular kind of palm (Elo̲ëis Guineensis), which grew wild in the forest area just behind the mangrove swamps on either side of the delta, the native middlemen adapted themselves in precisely the same way as had the Liverpool merchants. Trade continued to run along the customary channels. Vested interest and malarial fever discouraged any

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1. Dike, Trade and Politics in the Niger Delta, Oxford 1956, p.63.

incentive to change. Gradually the situation recrystallised, with native middlemen on the coast partitioning the interior markets amongst themselves, and the Liverpool merchants, dependent for their supplies on the coastal rulers, supporting them both from within and without.

One of the main factors which did cause the pattern to alter slowly was the increasing success of penetration into the interior up the Niger itself. As it became clear to the humanitarians, in the years immediately after 1807, that the slave trade was if anything increasing in the hands of other nations, it was argued with some plausibility that, the source of slaves being "the interior tribes of the Sudan", an attempt ought to be made to make direct contact with them, in order to conduct legitimate commerce which would effectively "by its own virtue suppress slavery".[1] This theory was brought nearer to realisation by Lander's epoch-making discovery of the mouth of the Niger in 1830. At last a way to the interior was opened; not only could the slave trade be stifled at its source, but the vast trans-Saharan trade carried on by the Arabs could be captured by traders using the Bights route. Here was Eldorado indeed.

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1. Buxton, The African Slave Trade and its Remedy, London 1840.

The first attempts to use Lander's discovery were, however, disastrous. Between 1832 and 1834, the Birkenhead shipbuilder Macgregor Laird ascended the Niger as far as Nupe, and although he made a profit, thirty-nine of the forty-eight Europeans died. Even more disastrous was the Niger expedition of 1841, which was inspired by the humanitarians, who at the height of their influence were able to get government support for their venture. Forty-eight Europeans failed to return, with the result that the penetration of the Niger was delayed for over a decade.

In 1854, however, the health problem was solved. W.B.Baikie, backed by Laird, had led an expedition up the Niger-Benue in an attempt to link up with Barth, the explorer who was coming overland across the Sahara. He failed to achieve contact, but not a single life was lost on the expedition, owing to a daily use of quinine. Moreover the expedition achieved a small trading surplus, a subsidy was obtained from the government by Laird's Steamship Company to open up trade on the Niger, and thus the period of regular commerce up-river was inaugurated.

The significance of these activities was not lost either on Laird or on the Liverpool traders in the Oil Rivers (as the coastal estuaries had come to be called). Laird during the first expedition up the Niger could already imagine the

impact of a regular cargo service from Liverpool on the people of the river banks, who were only too willing to encourage competition and to escape the clutches of the middlemen on the coast. Laird realised that not only was the real source of wealth the palm-producing regions of the Niger, and not the Islamic states further to the north, but also, the corollary of this, that the inevitable hostility of the coastal middlemen, particularly of Brass, would have to be faced if trade was to be won. And behind the coastal rulers were the Liverpool merchants. Up to the establishment of the Protectorate in 1885, the opposition of the Liverpool merchants to traders penetrating the Niger was implacable. They bitterly opposed the government subsidy to Laird and effectively prevented its renewal in 1864.[1] They resented any attempt to divert trade from the coastal middlemen, and bombarded the Foreign Office with memoranda arguing that the system of African middlemen ought to be strengthened. As for the middlemen themselves, armed by the Liverpool merchants, they resorted increasingly to force, in order to hold what they regarded as their own. Riverain peoples were coerced, and in 1859 Laird's steamer on its way down river was, itself, attacked. This pattern was to continue throughout the sixties and seventies.

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1. P.P. 1864 XLI.

However equivocal government policy towards West Africa appeared, it was based on two principles which in fact never altered. These were, first, that the visible cost of any policy must be minimal and secondly that the effort to stamp out the slave trade must be continued. This could be done, it was believed, with two weapons: the navy and legitimate commerce. Thus, a subsidy was given to the former and every encouragement consistent with economy to the taxpayer to the latter.

Annexation of territory as an instrument of policy was ruled out both on practical and on theoretical grounds. There was little incentive to establish uneconomic colonies on fever-ridden coasts where the revenue was uncertain; besides, it offended free trade morality. All that was needed to encourage and protect traders was the visit of an occasional gun-boat.

There were various forces militating against official hopes. In the first place it was axiomatic that with penetration inland of white missionaries and traders, and the conflicts that ensued, government would become more and more involved in African politics. Not only would British subjects demand protection, but also the conflict between the Niger traders on the one hand and the Liverpool traders on the other would not permit government to escape implication. Throughout the nineteenth century the pattern of relationships with African states was

becoming increasingly complex. Government refused to prevent the activities of the Niger traders for the sake of the Liverpool traders; the former demanded protection, and the activities of the navy in keeping open the rivers to trade brought conflicts with the native peoples.

In the second place sheer ignorance and slow communications (until the laying of the telegraphic cable to Bonny in 1879 it took a minimum of two months for despatches to be sent from the West Coast, received and answered - and it was usually nearer three) prevented the application of any consistent policy to African affairs. The man on the spot, be he consul (the first Consul to the Bights was appointed in 1849) or trader, often in the absence of sufficient instructions from home, had to act as he thought fit, and often the British government was presented with a fait accompli.

Finally, the necessity for economy meant that governments were sometimes not in control of policy even at home. The Treasury could and often did impose a barrier on any schemes for expansion during the middle of the century, knowing full well that sufficient support could always be drummed up in parliament against any increase in government expenditure. Burnt fingers on the African scene always produced the Select Committee, and it was one such, appointed in 1865, after the disastrous Ashanti war of the previous year, which attempted to

remove policy from the hands of officials and put it under the watchful eye of parliament. Its report advised rigid economy in administration, the eventual abandonment of all settlements on the West Coast except for Sierra Leone, and no further expansion of territory in the meantime.[1]

Although the implementation of the report was hardly seriously attempted, and the diplomatic situation in Europe caused it to be forgotten during the 'eighties, such a weighty document could not be wholly ignored nor fail to have immediate repercussions in the Bights. Although there was no attempt at withdrawal from the Bights altogether, government took much more pains to ascertain ambitions of local officials and keep them in check. In the Oil Rivers, the powers of the Courts of Equity[2] were defined by the 1872 West Africa Order in Council, not only to give them some legal basis but to limit precisely the extent of any British responsibility for their actions.[3] The tendency to reduce or define official commitments was paralleled on the Niger. In 1869 the consulate which had been established at Lokoja in 1866 in order to protect trade was withdrawn, and in 1871 the regular annual naval expedition up the Niger, continuous since 1859, was also withdrawn.

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1. P.P. 1865 V, Report of Select Committee.
2. Arbitration tribunals for the settlement of trade disputes on which both native and European merchants were represented. Operated on basis of fine and trade boycott, often calling on consul to enforce decisions.
3. F.O.84/1356. Livingston to Granville, 29.4.72.

Government could not however solve the latent conflict between a policy of official withdrawal and unofficial advance. Through the 'seventies, the traders and missionaries were advancing on all fronts with more or less official encouragement, and government could not escape some responsibility for their acts. A cheap method of protection upriver was achieved only by passing responsibility on to someone else. In 1871 an agreement was negotiated with Masaba, Emir of Nupe, whereby he undertook to protect British subjects in return for the recognition of his role as middleman on the Niger-Benue. Since large-scale penetration by Europeans beyond Nupe was as yet not feasible, this was for the moment readily agreed to. However, it was not a solution which could be applied to the Oil Rivers. European penetration had already been made behind the middlemen, and was likely to increase rather than diminish. Moreover there was no one strong authority like Nupe with whom the British could negotiate such protection. Throughout the 'seventies, the policy of the British government became in practise less tenable. Trade was expanding, the economic opportunities in the Bights were great. Effective exploitation required peace and security without which trade could not flourish. The penetration of Europeans had, however, produced conflicts amongst the Delta states which made trade insecure. Naval bombardment had only been effective for so long as the warships had remained on the

coast. As soon as they were withdrawn the old troubles re-appeared. Consuls endeavouring to settle trade disputes by that very act involved themselves in African politics. Some time, a decision would have to be made one way or the other: either direct government intervention in a situation which was rapidly becoming anarchic, or a complete official withdrawal from the Bights, carrying the 1865 report to its logical conclusion.

That decision might have remained in the distant future but for two new factors which entered the situation and which were not altogether unconnected. The one was a trade crisis on the Niger, the other was the prospect of foreign competition in what had hitherto been almost exclusively a British preserve.

In addition to the hostility of the native middlemen, trade expansion produced its economic corollary: cut-throat competition. The extent of this competition was expanded by the nature of the vested interest which the Liverpool merchants had created on the coast. This drove new firms into the Niger to circumvent the middlemen, where high profits were possible. Over-competition combined with increased prices and heavy losses sustained through attacks by hostile communities threatened to send a number of firms to the wall. One man of vision and energy saw the only cure - monopoly backed by political power.

George Goldie was by any standards an extraordinary man.[1] Born in 1846, the fourth son of the Speaker of the House of Keys, he had a tempestuous early career, and one which was not calculated to carry him into the higher echelons of Victorian society. He was left a fortune in the 'sixties, which caused him to abandon the army and run off to Egypt, where he lived for three years with an Arab mistress. On his return to England, he eloped to France with the family governess, to whom he was married the following year. Highly intelligent, he had no career and lacked the temperament to work up from a subordinate position. He had a reputation for irresponsibility, which he combined with a convinced atheism and an atrocious temper. He had however a personal magnetism which engendered unquestioning loyalty. This was the man who was to dominate Nigerian affairs for nearly twenty years.

In 1875 Goldie joined the firm of Holland Jacques and Company, which had been trading on the Niger for some six years. The firm, owing to severe competition, was in serious financial difficulties, and Goldie went out to the Niger in 1877 to find out why. It was then that he propounded his remedy.

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1. Real name George Dashwood Goldie Taubman. See Flint, Sir George Goldie and the Making of Nigeria, 1960, p.3. Work hereafter cited as Flint Goldie.

To prescribe a cure was one thing, to achieve it quite another. Yet the impossible happened. By a brilliant stroke, Goldie in November 1879 succeeded in merging the four main companies on the Niger[1] into the United African Company, with obvious monopolistic intentions. Although the amalgamation did not give Goldie any financial control over the new company[2], he was the moving spirit behind it. It is doubtful if as yet he had any political ambitions. The immediate object was commercial, and the move was made "in order to present a firm front to aggression" (on the part of the natives)[3]. Anyway, the idea that the government could be induced to give political sanction to a commercial transaction by establishing a colony was quite fantastic.

What translated fantasy into reality was the sudden appearance of foreign colonial activity in the Bights. British policy had hitherto rested on the assumption that other European powers would not or could not interfere with the commercial hegemony established by Britain. The shattering of this assumption brought about a basic rethinking in government policy.

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1. West African Company; Central African Company (until 1876 Holland Jacques & Co.); Alexander Miller, Brother & Co.; J. Pinnock. Flint, Goldie, pp.31-2.

2. Flint, Goldie, p.30.

3. F.O. C.P. 4092. Goldie to Salisbury 18.12.79.

It was all very well to advocate a policy of "open door" whilst British industrial supremacy was unchallenged. But after 1870 Europe underwent an industrial revolution, and the gap between Britain and the world closed. Britain could hardly look on with equanimity while foreign colonies, especially those of France, were established and the door was slammed. A foreign colony usually meant protective tariffs.

Precisely what sparked off what is usually called the "partition of Africa" is a matter of some controversy. One theory sees partition in isolation, a scramble directly caused by the English occupation of Egypt in 1882.[1] This interpretation is perhaps too facile. The other school of thought sees the partition as the culmination of the penetration of Africa by Europe which had been going on since the early sixteenth century. This movement received a decisive check in the late 1780's as Europe plunged into a period of revolution and internal unrest, only to emerge again in the late 1870's as a new pattern of stability emerged.[2] The power vacuums of Germany and Italy had been filled, and the crushing defeat of France in 1870 had not only brought a Bismarckian peace to Europe, but had brought fundamental political change to France for what

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1. E.g. Robinson, Gallagher & Denny, Africa and the Victorians, 1961.

2. See inter alia Hargreaves, Prelude to the Partition of West Africa, 1963; Flint, Nigeria and Ghana, New Jersey 1966.

turned out to be the last time. The decisive date here is 1879, three years before Britain occupied Egypt. In that year all the threats to the Third Republic in France were removed. The monarchist President MacMahon resigned, the Senate with the Chamber returned a republican majority, and the Napoleonic heir, the Prince Imperial, was killed at Isandhlwana.[1] As shares picked up on the Bourse, France began to turn to Africa as a field for expansion for her infant industries. Bismarck was only too willing to encourage France's colonial ambitions, not only as a method of driving Britain and France apart, but also to divert French energy away from Europe and the running sore of Alsace-Lorraine. As far as France was concerned, if colonies were to have any value, they must be exclusive and protective, enabling her backward industry to compete with Britain. This was bound to lead to friction.

The general renaissance of French political activity in Africa was marked in 1879 in Senegal with the military campaign against the Tokolors at Saboucire.[2] In the same year began the French intervention on the lower Niger, with the visit of the Comte de Senelle to the Emir of Nupe. His object was to acquire land to build a trading station, and to obtain a promise of free trade. With these concessions he formed the Compagnie francaise de l'Afrique Equatoriale.

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1. Cobban, A History of Modern France 1961, II, pp.211-218.
2. Hargreaves, op.cit., pp.256-257.

Goldie set feverishly to work, fearful that the French had some grandiose plan for linking the Niger and Senegal rivers in one vast French colony to the exclusion of British trade. Negotiations with Umoru, Emir of Nupe, in 1879 gave the United African Company a monopoly of trade, and when Semelle returned in 1880 he was told his concession was rescinded. When Semelle died later that year, the French threat seemed to have been met. This was only the beginning, however. Semelle's place was taken by Commandant Mattei of the French War Ministry, who was given Consular rank by the Ministry of Marine. When a revolt broke out in Nupe, Mattei, by insisting on helping the National African Company to suppress it, won free trade for the French.

By 1882, therefore, the French had broken into the Niger-Benue trade. On the lower river the Compagnie had done well enough in the palm-oil trade to attract a second French company, the Compagnie du Senegal et de la Côte Occidentale de l'Afrique. By the middle of 1883 this new company had founded about twenty factories, with their headquarters amongst the Brassmen[1], enemies to all upriver traders and particularly of the British company.

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1. Hargreaves, op.cit., pp.277.

As far as Goldie was concerned, the threat which the French posed was real. Not only were the French companies the equals of the National African Company in strength, but it seemed as if the bad old days before amalgamation had returned. This belief was strengthened by the fact that British firms, encouraged by the defeat of the National African Company's monopoly and by the lowering of prices the Company had achieved, started reappearing on the Niger. There was a limit to the usefulness of the policy of amalgamation in order to restore a monopoly, although admittedly the policy had not yet been exhausted. Therefore Goldie began to move towards applying the other part of his remedy, which he had prescribed in 1877: to secure his position he would have to have political control.

Precisely when Goldie came up with the idea of securing a Royal Charter is not quite clear. Even before the formation of the United Africa Company rumours had been circulating around the Niger that a "Company is contemplating to get a charter of the Niger trade to the exclusion of others entering."[1] In 1881 the grant of a charter to the British North Borneo Company may have provided Goldie with his incentive, but certainly did not create his opportunity. Goldie did not make any formal request for a charter until 1885[2], although

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1. C.M.S., C.A.3/04(a). Bishop Crowther to Hutchinson 16.10.79.
2. Not in 1881 as stated by Dike, Crowe and others. Flint, Goldie, p.42 can find no evidence for any such request then in any official F.O. or C.O. correspondence or private papers; nor can the present writer.

he reorganised the Company in June 1882 as the National African Company, with power to acquire administrative and political as well as commercial privileges. At the same time Goldie increased his influence in high places. Lord Aberdare, a Liberal ex-minister, was persuaded into the Company as chairman; Joseph Chamberlain, President of the Board of Trade, became a share-holder. With an increase to £1,000,000 in the nominal capital held by the Company, and with negotiations for amalgamation taking place in Paris with the French companies, Goldie was all set to move forward.

There were other disquieting signs of French activity in the Bights, activity which seemed to emphasize that any political position which the French won would be used against the general interests of British trade. In 1882, the French established a new colony in Gabon, south of the Cameroon, penetration from which seemed to threaten the oil markets of Old Calabar. The advent of Jules Ferry, a convinced imperialist, to power as French Prime Minister, heralded the swift annexation of the Popos, Cotonou, Aghwey and Porto Novo, which cut off Lagos from the Gold Coast, during 1883. This, coupled with the success of French trade on the Niger, which seemed to indicate a danger that the French government might give protection to their two companies, brought a British government, opposed in theory to African expansion, to reconsider its policy completely.

The government's response to initial French moves was slow, a slowness born of reluctance to act and inter-departmental bickering rather than of lack of knowledge as to what was required. Throughout 1882-1883, the French threat to British trade was hammered home in a flood of letters from consul and traders. Hewett[1] urged the Foreign Office to intervene in the Cameroons region and accept the offer of the Cameroons princes, made originally in 1879[2], but never answered, and repeated in 1881[3], to accept the protectorate of their country, otherwise "If we refuse their offer, they may seek the protection of the French with disastrous results for our trade in Southern Nigeria."[4] Hewett wished to see a policy of protection extended not only to the Cameroons but to the whole coast as far as Benin. Villiers Lister, Assistant Under Secretary in charge of African affairs, agreed with Hewett and waxed sanguine on "the possibility of altering the whole system of British policy as regards the native chiefs on the West Coast of Africa, and the abolition of the monopolies which are destructive to trade and productive of endless squabbles and wars."[5]

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1. Hewett was Consul for the Bights from 1880 until 1891.
2. F.O.C.P. 4824. Cameroons Princes to H.M.the Queen, 7.8.79.
3. Ibid. Bell & Acqua to Gladstone, 6.11.81.
4. Ibid. Hewett to Granville, 14.1.82.
5. P.R.O. 30/29/135. Memo by Lister, 4.1.82.

The Colonial Office response, however, to Hewett's proposals, when communicated to Kimberley by Granville, was icy. They were "not prepared to recommend.....the occupation of any part of the coast in question. The responsibilities of Her Majesty's Government are already very heavy, and it is very indesirable to add to them." The climate was "very pestilential", the demands on the taxpayer would be very heavy, and the question of slavery would of itself be "sufficient to deter H.M.G. from undertaking such a responsibility as is proposed if it can possibly be avoided."[1] The Colonial Office was certainly not going to be hurried out of its policy of drifting, which until now had served Britain's interests in the tropics so well, nor into initiating a revolution, by a danger anticipated but not yet materialised. In the event the Colonial Office made a counter-proposal that the Foreign Office might attempt to negotiate a comprehensive agreement with France for demarcation of spheres of influence, using as a carrot the Gambia, for which concession France would stay out of the Niger.[2] This proposal never got off the ground, however, as Lyons, Ambassador in Paris, advised against it in the current state of deterioration in amity between Britain and France over Egypt.

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1. F.O.C.P. 4824. Wingfield to Pauncefote, 15.4.82.

2. C.O. 147/52. Colonial Office to Foreign Office, 6.1.83.

With the advent of Jules Ferry and the consequent sharpening of French pessure, it clearly became less possible for the Colonial Office to argue that no threat was posed to British trade. The incentive was provided for a forward movement by the Foreign Office. Colonial Office hostility wrecked any idea of a colony; the French were not prepared to negotiate a partition on the basis of spheres of influence. The only alternative was some form of protectorate. This conclusion was reached late in 1882 as a matter of policy in the Foreign Office, but for months the discussion was to continue, in the face of mounting activity by the French, as to what sort of protectorate was necessary. A plan for a complete paraphernalia of consuls and vice-consuls superintending the external affairs of the native states in detail, leaving the internal affairs of the Africans in their own hands, was coming to grief over Treasury refusal to sanction the necessary establishment. At the other extreme it was clearly recognised that mere treaties with the local rulers, in which they undertook not to have any dealings with a foreign power without British sanction, were insufficient.[1]

In October 1883 Granville attempted to force the issue on to the Colonial Office by suggesting that the "time has come

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1. F.O.C.P. 4825. Foreign Office to Colonial Office, 22.5.83.

when it is desirable that H.M.G. should decide in what way they can best protect British trade in those areas where there is reason to believe that trade if properly developed would render them a more valuable possession than the existing British colonies on that Coast."[1] The Colonial Office was not prepared to be caught, however. As early as July they had suggested that before any decision was taken the matters at issue would have to go before the Cabinet. This answer was now returned to Granville, who agreed.[2]

The whole question of Britain in West Africa went before the Cabinet's colonial committee in November. A battle of memoranda ensued between the departments. The Colonial Office argued on the one hand that government should not annex or protect any fresh territories in Africa, but that an attempt should be made to settle all West African questions with France by negotiation, and by the cession of the Gambia. The Foreign Office insisted, on the other hand, that only if the Protectorates were safely secured could Britain negotiate from a basis of strength and might obtain, not only Porto Novo and the other places between Lagos and the Gold Coast annexed by the French in 1883, in exchange for the Gambia, but also "an engagement to

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1. F.O.C.P. 4869. Lister to Bramston, 5.10.83.
2. Ibid. Herbert to Pauncefote, 20.7.83; Colonial Office to Foreign Office, 5.10.83; Lister to Meade, 30.10.83.

abolish in all French Colonies or Settlements on the West Coast of Africa, whether existing or hereafter acquired, all differential duties on British goods and ships, and to place British subjects in those places upon a perfect equality with French subjects."[1]

On the whole the colonial committee's report was favourable to the Foreign Office view, and its findings were accepted by the Cabinet. Consul Hewett was to be sent out to the Bights to make treaties of protection with the chiefs of the Niger Delta, Oil Rivers and Cameroons region. The process of creating the protectorate was not, however, to become a charge on the Imperial Treasury, and British authority must be maintained by periodic visits of gunboat and consul. Beyond this, the Cabinet made no attempt to formulate the methods by which authority could be asserted and maintained.

Moreover, it was to take a further six months after the Cabinet's decision before Hewett was ready to move. These months were mainly taken up with the question of how to pay for the new protectorate without approaching the Treasury for more money on the Foreign Office estimates. The sum involved was only some £5000 for running costs and £8000 for initial expenditure, which two figures were, characteristically, cheese-pared down to £3625 and £5790 respectively,[2] before they were

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1. F.O.C.P. 4955. Memos. by Lister, 24.10.83 & 16.11.83.
2. F.O.C.P. 5004. Lister to Lingen, 6.5.84; Courtney to Fitzmaurice, 26.5.84.

approved. In the face of the traders' refusal to be taxed to support the new establishment, and because of Treasury insistence, the money had to be found by economies within the department.

At last, all was ready; on May 16 1884, Hewett was given his instructions and a supply of treaty forms, and on May 30 he sailed for Bonny. He was to establish free trade throughout the area given to his charge for the citizens of all countries, and British protection from the Cameroons to Benin.[1] His task on both counts was not, however, to be quite so simple as the government anticipated.

* * * * *

Meanwhile, Goldie was playing a deep game. On the one hand he had to convince the British government of the dangers from France on the Niger, and urge that the only solution was some form of British protection; on the other hand he had to make sure that his was the sole influence or authority in the area under protection, in order to justify commercial monopoly. A British colony would mean free trade and all the evils of the pre-1879 period.

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1. F.O.C.P. 5004. Lister to Hewett, 16.5.84.

By the beginning of 1883 it was clear that negotiations between the National African Company and the French companies were breaking down. Goldie therefore indulged in a price war, committing his personal fortune, and raised prices paid for produce in the areas where the French also traded by some 25 per cent. By June 1884 the Senegal Company had had enough and sold out, and the following October the other French company did likewise. Thus, two weeks before the opening of the Berlin West Africa Conference, Goldie could report to the Foreign Office that French commercial competition had been eliminated from the Niger.[1]

To fulfil the second part of his aims was not quite so simple. When Hewett had suggested in 1882 that the Oil Rivers might be given over to a chartered company since Her Majesty's Government would then "be relieved of all financial and administrative responsibility of governing the country"[2], the Colonial Office, it will be remembered, rejected all his proposals out of hand since they did not feel the French danger to be pressing. When it became clear that it was, the usefulness of a company like the National African Company became increasingly apparent.

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1. F.O.C.P. 5033. Goldie to Anderson, 13.10.84.
2. F.O.C.P. 4824. Hewett to Granville, 14.1.82.

The fundamental reason for this was money, or rather lack of it, and it was this situation which was to be the principal cause of the renaissance of the chartered company as an instrument of imperial expansion in the last fifteen years of the nineteenth century. Goldie used the movement in his favour in a masterly way. "By systematically taking advantage of the Government's financial embarrassment Goldie was able gradually to attract to the National African Company an official status as an agent of the British government."[1] Thus, throughout the protracted discussions of 1883-1884 between the Colonial Office and the Foreign Office, Goldie was the natural ally of the former. His motives were simple. He had no intention of providing the Foreign Office with a permanent source of revenue which would lessen the incentive of the government to transfer the administration to the National African Company, if and when the time was ripe, particularly as the company itself would be the chief taxpayer. Anderson, at the Foreign Office, supported Goldie's objection, remarking "the proposal that the trade should pay is without precedent, and as regards the tax, our traders would be handicapped, for there seems to be no means short of annexation.....by which we could tax foreigners." He also added that if the traders paid for the consuls "the latter might suffer in their independence."[2]

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1. Flint, Goldie, p.55.
2. F.O.C.P. 5004. Memo by Anderson, 27.2.84.

Goldie was, however, prepared to offer any help short of hard cash to establish British influence on the Niger. Thus, early in 1883, he had offered to provide at his own expense a British Vice-Consul for the Niger.[1] The offer was refused, as the Foreign Office had no illusions about the motives behind it. A year later the attitude of the Foreign Office had altered, although not their beliefs about Goldie's motives. They were now resigned to the fact that their "desires for Vice-Consuls" would have to be limited, and that money must be saved by all possible means.[2] On July 31 1884, McIntosh, chief agent of the National African Company, was appointed British Vice-Consul with no salary and "no claim on Her Majesty's Government" when his services should cease.[3] That Hewett's assistant in negotiating treaties of protection on the Niger was also an employee of the National African Company put the latter in a position of unique advantage.[4]

Goldie had been equally active with regard to expanding his influence on the Lower Niger itself. Concentrating on the region behind the delta, since the delta, he believed, could be easily controlled by naval warships, he formed a fleet of twenty river gunboats in 1884, to protect company factories.

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1. F.O.C.P. 4825. National African Company to Foreign Office, 28.2.83.
2. F.O.C.P. 5004. Memo by Lister, 27.2.83.
3. F.O.C.P. 5021. Granville to Hewett, 31.7.84.
4. Flint, Goldie, p.58.

These gunboats proved useful in offering friendly rulers assistance against rebels to the rulers' own authority. Far more important than a judicious use of gunboat diplomacy were the treaties he had concluded with native rulers. These treaties conceded complete sovereignty to the Company, granted land rights, and complete trading rights.[1] When Hewett arrived on the Niger in August 1884 to conclude treaties in the name of the British government, he went upriver in a Company boat, was forced to rely on the Company's local staff for information and provisions, and was confronted into the bargain by a prior set of treaties concluded in the name of the National African Company, covering both banks of the Niger up to its confluence with the Benue. These treaties, conferring as they did, monopolistic trading privileges, Hewett was unable to approve in toto. Nevertheless he recognised their force, and in the treaties he negotiated on the Niger he added an article which recognised that permission to trade should be regulated according to the prior agreement with the National African Company. Thus Hewett had been prevented from ensuring free trade throughout the whole of his area, and all Goldie lacked in terms of power was the instrument of the Royal Charter itself.

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1. Hertslet, Commercial Treaties XVII 158 ff.

Neither was Consul Hewett to succeed fully in the other part of his task: to take under British protection the whole of the area from the Cameroons to Benin. He arrived on the coast on June 21 1884, armed with presentsof cloth, liquor, bright baubles, and treaty forms which promised British protection, asked for British control of external relations, full consular jurisdiction over foreigners, and also promised progress, civilization, and freedom of religion and trade,[1] Many of the Oil Rivers chiefs were suspicious of the free trade clause and would only consent to sign provisional treaties, with the offending clause removed. In the space of three weeks, however, Benin River, New Calabar, Bonny and Old Calabar were acquired. The Brassmen proved more intractable, refusing to sign a treaty for more than six months unless Hewett obtained "exclusive use of the Asé market" from the National African Company.[2] Nevertheless, as Hewett sailed for the Cameroons, he had reason to feel optimistic. The central core of British commercial interests had been made safe by his three weeks' work. The easiest part of his task lay ahead, since the Cameroons chiefs had asked for protection. His surprise, therefore, was great when he sailed into the Cameroons River on July 19, to be confronted by the flag of Imperial Germany.

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1. Ibid., 131-154.

2. F.O.C.P. 5021 Hewett to Granville 30.7.84.

Whatever the German motives,[1] their acquisition of the Cameroons (Hewett had been forestalled by five days) had revealed with startling effect the inadequacy of the gunboat-and-consul type of diplomacy. Germany was a new colonial power, and it was in her interest, against that of the old-established colonial powers, to insist on a policy of effective occupation. German intervention, therefore, caused Hewett to hurry on the process of treaty-making, and by September, he could fairly claim to have covered not only the coast between Lagos and the Cameroons, but also up the Niger-Benue as far as Lokoja and Ibi.

The British were not, however, unduly worried by the German moves, superficially irritating though they might be. It was the French whom the British wished to keep out, because the presence of the French usually meant difficulties for English trade. As far as Gladstone was concerned, in Germany "we could have no better neighbours,"[2] and the whole idea of any conflict over the Cameroons seemed senseless.[3] By early 1885, when the dust had settled, the two powers were able to come to an amicable agreement over spheres of influence. Britain withdrew claims established by Hewett in the Cameroons area, and ceded the Baptist mission station at Ambas Bay,

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1. Discussed in Taylor, Germany's First Bid for Colonies (1938).
2. Eyck, Bismarck Vol.III, p.497.
3. F.O.C.P. 5021 Meade to Lister 7.10.84.

whereupon the missionaries under diplomatic pressure sold out to a German mission society. Germany, in return, yielded a free hand to Britain on the Niger.

The free hand was not easily won. German intervention in Africa initially directed against England, produced a limited co-operation between Bismarck and Ferry on the basis of like interests. The immediate upshot of this Franco-German co-operation was the Berlin West African Conference which met in November 1884. The programme laid down for this conference, which was engineered by Ferry and Bismarck without reference to Britain,[1] involved freedom of commerce in the Congo basin; the application of the stipulations of the Vienna Congress of 1815, respecting freedom of river navigation on the Danube, to the Congo and the Niger; and the determination of the formalities under which new annexations on the coast of Africa were to be considered effective.[2] The motives behind the summoning of the conference were clear to the British government. Lister remarked that the "proposal for securing freedom of navigation on the Niger, where navigation is perfectly free, but where British influence is paramount, clearly is not intended to be favourable to England."[3]

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1. Crowe, The Berlin West African Conference (1942)
2. F.O.C.P. 5023. Granville to Scott 7.10.84.
3. F.O.C.P. 5023. Minute by Lister, 14.10.84.

In the event Goldie had served Britain well. By the elimination of commercial opposition on the Niger, and by virtue of the protectorate treaties, it was clearly possible for Goldie and the British delegates to argue at the conference that Britain was the Niger power and was not prepared to give up that position or withdraw the protectorate treaties "until..... satisfied as to the conditions on which /she/ could consent to withdraw them."[1] If Britain alone traded on the Niger, the proposal for an international commission to control navigation was totally irrelevant.

Much to France's dismay, Bismarck accepted this argument, thereby taking much of the steam out of the Franco-German entente. In exchange for a British promise to recognize Leopold's position in the Congo, Bismarck supported a revised Niger Navigation Act drafted by the British delegation. This act, while supporting the principle of international free trade and navigation for the Niger, made Britain solely responsible for ensuring its observance. Internationally the Bights area was safe for Britain, and in June 1885 the government took the formal step of constituting the territories between Lagos and the Cameroons, the banks of the Niger as far as Lokoja, and the Benue to Ibi, into the Niger Protectorate.[2]

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1. Ibid. Memo by Anderson 14.10.84.
2. F.O.C.P. 5161. Notification in London Gazette, 5.6.85.

If Britain was able to argue that she was in effective occupation of the Niger because of Goldie's work, the issue of a Charter to the National Africa Company was an eminently logical step, particularly as it constituted the cheapest and most effective way of discharging the obligations incurred at Berlin, and of administering the protectorate beyond the Delta. The Charter was duly issued in July 1886, but only after protracted negotiations which did not always run smoothly.

There were two reasons for this. In the first place, although there was no conflict in principle as to whether or not a Charter should be issued, there was some doubt as to the precise form which it should take. The Foreign Office officials, led by Pauncefote, sought to retain some measure of governmental supervision over the minutiae of the Company's administration. Goldie, on the other hand, argued for as completely free a hand as possible, insisting that the Company's rights derived from independent treaties with the indigenous rulers. In the end his point of view prevailed, owing to the fact that the Foreign Office was in no position to ask the Treasury for the money which imperial control would involve, and also because of the inability of the legal experts to write into a Charter the safeguards the Foreign Office wanted.[1]

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1. See Flint, Goldie, pp.70-87 for the full story of the negotiations.

In the second place there was delay because the government hoped that the National Africa Company would be able to come to terms with the Oil Rivers traders, so enabling the Charter to be extended over the whole Protectorate. This proved impossible, and it was in many ways unfortunate, not least in terms of future conflicts between administrations on the spot and the severing of traditional trade routes and cultural contacts, that, by the issue of the Charter in 1886, the protectorate was arbitrarily split into two parts.

Nevertheless, the main objectives had been secured. 1886 had seen the clouds of uncertainty suddenly lift. British paramountcy in the Bights and on the Lower Niger had been accorded international recognition. The National Africa Company, now the Royal Niger Company, was busy formalising its administration on the lower Niger-Benue. An administration would in due course be extended to the Oil Rivers, but there was no hurry. Johnston, Acting Consul to the Bights, summarised the nature of British rule at this time admirably: ".....our policy may for the present chiefly assume a negative character. So long as we keep other nations out, we need not be in a hurry to go in."[1]

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1. F.O. 84/1750 Johnston to Anderson, 13.11.86.

CHAPTER TWO

MAJOR MACDONALD

The man who was to play such a decisive role at this juncture in West African affairs was not unfitted to fill the part. Slim, of medium height and stature, with a military moustache and fair hair slightly balding, of upright carriage and at thirty-six still a bachelor, Macdonald was at the height of his powers.[1] While his career had not previously been one of outstanding distinction, it had nevertheless been marked by solid and steady progress - and his training and development were to be of the utmost significance for his approach to West African affairs.

Claude Macdonald was born on the twelfth of June 1852, the eldest son of General James "Hamish" Dawson Macdonald by his wife Mary Ellen Dougan, who was of Irish blood, at the family home in Stirling.[2] General Macdonald had had a distinguished career in the Bengal staff corps, and while Claude was playing with toy soldiers, his father was taking part in the heroic defence of Calcutta during the mutiny.[3] In his early years the

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1. There is a photograph of Macdonald in Mockler Ferryman, Up the Niger, 1892.
2. Dictionary of National Biography , alphabetical entry under Macdonald.
3. Hart, Annual Army List 1865.

young boy saw little of his father and soon developed an ability to look after himself. He learnt to shoot and thus prepare himself for the army career that was naturally cut out for the eldest (and as it turned out, the only) son of a distinguished officer.

At the age of thirteen began the indispensable preliminary grooming of the Victorian officer-gentleman. In August 1865 he was sent to England to school at Uppingham, at this time under the headmastership of Edward Thring, a pioneer in the recognition of the value of the fine arts in education.[1] Macdonald might have reaped the full benefit of Thring's revolution, as during the short period he was there, the School Chapel was opened, and the celebrated German musician, Paul David, arrived - the man who was to be in the forefront of the developments in school musical activities during the next forty years.[2] Unfortunately, however, circumstances dictated that Macdonald should leave Uppingham after only sixteen months - why is not known.[3] Nevertheless he had acquired an interest in music unusual in an army man of the time, which he was never to lose. This interest was to flower during his mature years in Japan, when he took up oriental music with a more than academic interest.[4]

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1. Scholes, The Oxford Companion to Music, p.317.
2. Scholes, op.cit., p.279.
3. For much of the information in this paragraph I am indebted to the Headmaster of Uppingham School.
4. Sals. Private Papers Macdonald to McDonall 11.10.98 no vol. no., filed under Macdonald.

After he left Uppingham in 1866, little is known of Macdonald until he entered Sandhurst, at the start of his army career proper, in 1869. His education continued on a less formal basis under private tuition, and possibly suffered from his father's insistence on the family accompanying him wherever his command took him. Certainly Macdonald had few companions of his own age and grew up in completely military surroundings. This constant mixing with older men may have accounted for an early aloofness in his manner, and a complete lack of interest in women until he was nearly forty.[1] At Sandhurst he made moderate academic progress on the standard fare, although his ability to shoot was noted, as was his "intense curiosity about everything".[2] At the age of twenty he passed out as a sub-lieutenant in the 74th Highland Light Infantry. Prospects were considerably brighter in the army for an intelligent but not over-rich young man like Macdonald than they had been some few years earlier; for this was the age of Cardwell's new model army, of short service enlistment, of the small efficient fighting unit backed by an adequate reserve, and, above all, of promotion by merit and not by purchase. Not all of these reforms were implemented at once, but Macdonald felt the impact of many of them. His promotion was assured, if it was still slow. Two years after passing out, he became a lieutenant, at twenty-seven a captain.[3]

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1. Personal information Captain Jordan.
2. Report on Sub-Lieutenant Macdonald, Sandhurst archives, 18.6.72.
3. Hart's New Army List, relevant volumes.

Cardwell also attempted to streamline recruitment on a territorial basis by amalgamations, and under a localisation scheme of April 1873 the 74th Highlanders were linked for administrative and enlistment purposes with the 26th.Cameronians at their depot at Hamilton.[1] This brought Macdonald conveniently near the family seat at Stirling when the regiment was stationed at home; not that he was able to take much advantage of this, since from 1875 to 1876 the regiment was stationed in Malta, as the eastern question loomed yet again ominously on the horizon. Macdonald was not, however, to be privileged to have a front row seat, as later that year, (1876), as part of a general move to keep the temperature down during the Constantinople Conference, the regiment was shipped off to the Far East.[2] This was to be Macdonald's only sojourn east of Cape Gardefui before he took up his appointment as ambassador at Peking in 1896.

In November 1877 Macdonald found himself making the long sea journey home to take up an appointment as an instructor at the Institute of Musketry.[3] Macdonald spent over three years at the Institute in Glasgow, improving not only the shooting of his cadets, but also his own. When his regiment returned from the Far East in January 1880, it underwent another

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1. Regimental Records of H.L.I., p.123.
2. Ibid., pp.123-4.
3. Hart, New Army List.

reorganisation, during which the 74th Highlanders became the 2nd Battalion Highland Light Infantry, with quarters at Aldershot.[1] Macdonald was transferred along with his regiment, and resumed teaching musketry in the Staff College at Aldershot.[2] Here he was to stay until the events took place which were to change his whole career.

Before, however, we examine the Egyptian problem and the impact it had on Macdonald, it is important to note how events had already shaped his character. Emerging from the obscurity surrounding much of his early life we see an officer, a gentleman, the complete professional army man, dedicated to his career and with little or no private life. What little there was was spent in the company of fellow officers at the Junior United Service Club in London: a routine broken only by the annual visit to the family home in Scotland. He was a man who would take on any job because he had no commitments and no responsibilities; and who had made something of a name for himself in his own circle by his ability to shoot straight. The picture is not, however, complete; it is altogether too simple and crude. The compassion for human suffering has yet to be

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1. Regimental Records of H.L.I., p.124.
2. Hart, New Army List.

seen, but one can nevertheless pick out a certain sensitivity which gives point and individuality - the appreciation of music, that "intense curiosity" noted at Sandhurst, even a most unmilitary preoccupation with learning for learning's sake, seen in an attempt to teach himself German during these years (an asset, incidentally, of great value to him in his later career).[1] Here obviously was a man dedicated to the public weal but too intelligent to be a mere yes-man.

What prevented Macdonald from reaching the top in the army was the great crisis over Egypt and Suez which, beginning in 1876, ran through a succession of political disasters, culminating in the invasion of that country and its subsequent occupation by Britain. The purchase of £4 million-worth of shares in the Suez Canal from the Khedive Ismail by Disraeli revealed not so much the latter's political acumen as the former's impecuniosity.[2] British interest in the area grew as Egypt slid deeper and deeper into financial difficulties. The following year the Khedive suspended payment of his debts. This caused intense international activity, and a four-power debt commission (the Caisse) was forced upon the Khedive in May 1876. France, Italy and Austria-Hungary all nominated represen-

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1. Sals. Private Papers Macdonald to Macdonell, op.cit.

2. This summary of the background to the Egyptian crisis is based on Robinson Gallagher & Denny, Africa and the Victorians. 1964. Tignor, Gt.Britain and the Modernisation of Egypt, New York 1965. Cromer Modern Egypt London 1908. For a contemporary birds eye view F.O. 141/151.

tatives, a course from which Lord Derby shrank. This was followed by an Anglo-French mission, semi-official on the British side, which resulted in a Dual Control of Egyptian finances, an Englishman and a Frenchman acting as controllers-general for the imposing of reforms on a reluctant Khedive. When the Khedive reacted against these reforms, the powers induced the Sultan of Turkey, Egypt's nominal overlord, to depose Ismail in favour of his son Tewfik (April 1879). Quite suddenly the Anglo-French policy of informal sway was developing into a total direction of Egypt's internal affairs. The new Khedive made some sort of composition with his creditors by the Law of Liquidation in the following year, but his authority was badly damaged in the process. On September 9 1881 the army under one Urabi surrounded the Khedive's palace and demanded the dismissal of his ministry, the calling of the Chamber of Notables, and the restoring of the army to its former strength before the Anglo-French economies. The Khedive had no choice but to yield, and the Anglo-French condominium was critically shaken. Urabi took advantage of the popular movement in his favour to force through a new constitution with himself as Minister of War. With Urabi in the ascendant, and the threat of a complete breakdown in Anglo-French influence, the time had passed for diplomatic action. In May the British and French fleets were sent to Alexandria to protect foreigners, and in the hope of bluffing

Urabi into surrender. The Colonel's answer was to begin fortifying Alexandria and to threaten to block the Suez canal. The crisis had arrived. French policy had changed with the fall of Gambetta in January 1882 and Freycinet, the new Prime Minister, believed that France's interests lay more in Europe than outside it. The new Chamber refused to countenance military intervention in Egypt, nor would they even go so far as the minimal concession made by Freycinet to the British, that they would defend the canal. On July 29, Freycinet resigned, and France ceased to have any active interest in Egypt. Admiral Seymour, in command of the British fleet, in the meantime had pointed out on July 3, that Urabi's new defences threatened his fleet. On July 9 he received permission to destroy them if they were persisted in; on the 11th. he did so after a ten and a half hour bombardment. During the first exchanges the French, under orders from Paris, steamed away.

The British bombardment of Alexandria, far from suppressing it, strengthened Urabi's hold on the country. Anti-foreign riots spread, a jihad was declared against the British. Tewfik fled from Cairo in danger of his life and placed himself under Seymour's protection. Urabi gave warning that he would destroy the Canal in defence of Egypt[1], and Britain therefore decided to send an expedition under Sir Garnet Wolseley (July 20).

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1. Beatty, Ferdinand de Lesseps, 1956, p.276.

It was of a size (16,400 men), which expressed a determination to pacify Egypt alone if need be. Four days later Parliament voted £2,300,000 to pay for the expedition. The foundations for formal intervention were laid.

When Macdonald received the news of hostilities in Egypt, he was with his regiment at Aldershot, taking part in manoeuvres.[1] Under orders, he at once prepared for active service, and on August 8 sailed from Portsmouth.[2] As one of a body of thirty officers aboard the boat, he would have been well versed with the military objectives which had to be achieved in Egypt: a quick victory, followed by pacification and the inauguration of a sound administration. No one expected this to take long; the occupation was to be temporary, for the actual administration was not a soldier's job. Indeed, what had oiled the wheels of decision in the Cabinet, and had induced Parliament to be so free with its vote (275-19) was the fact that intervention was to be the instrument of a quick settlement, with early withdrawal, leaving the Egyptians "to manage their own affairs".[3] When Macdonald arrived at Alexandria on August 20, he expected his sojourn to be short.

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1. Regimental Records, H.L.I., p.125.
2. Military History of the Campaign of 1882, p.109.
3. Hansard, 3rd Series CCLXXII cols.1711-12.

The campaign that followed was indeed short. After a long and completely successful night march, Wolseley attacked at dawn on September 13, Urabi's entrenched position at Tel-el-Kebir. By daylight it was all over; a cavalry dash on Cairo had produced the surrender of Urabi, and the remaining forces which had not scattered at the first onslaught. The total British casualties were relatively light: sixty-seven killed and 382 wounded.[1] But a regimental breakdown reveals that the Highland Infantry were in the thick of the fighting, losing 24 of those killed, more than any other regiment. Macdonald was thus in close proximity to the enemy, and from the evidence, in his first campaign acquitted himself so well as to bring his name to the notice of his superiors. Wolseley wrote home in the official report of the campaign that Captain Macdonald was an officer recommended as "specially deserving", and as "deemed to be most worthy of consideration, and where all did well to have distinguished /himself/ most.[2] On the 18th of the same month he was promoted Brevet Major. He also received, as did others in the campaign, the Khedive's star and medal with clasp.

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1. Military History of the Campaign of 1882, p.198.
2. W.O. 33/40, Wolseley to War Office, 24.9.82.

The military solution proved easier to obtain than the political one. After Tel-el-Kebir, Egypt had collapsed completely. Law, order and internal administration had broken down, and there were no taxes coming in. Almost the easiest part of the problem of reconstruction was the return of the Khedive to Cairo and the appointment of a new ministry under Cherif Pasha. One of the first acts of the ministry, ably advised by Sir Edward Malet, who had been in Egypt as the British representative since 1881, and afterwards by Sir Evelyn Baring, who replaced Malet in September 1883, was to bring Urabi and the rebels for trial. In order to facilitate the work of the courts martial, a commission was appointed in Alexandria to enquire into charges against persons arrested and to take summary proceedings. As the net was thrown wider, Malet suggested to Cherif that in view of the volume of work and "possible injustice and hardship if the proceedings were protracted", small commissions or sub-commissions should be appointed to assist the work of the main commission as necessary. Malet also advised the presence of an English officer at the proceedings.[1] Cherif agreed to this on November 21 and asked for the name of the proposed officer. This threw the

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1. F.O. 141/163 Malet to Cherif, 17.11.82.

British agency into something of a turmoil. Most of Malet's staff were occupied in collecting information for Dufferin, who had been sent as Special Commissioner from Constantinople to report on the best means of balancing Egypt's budget. He had nobody to spare. He therefore hurriedly consulted with Sir Archibald Alison, an English officer in Cairo whom he knew slightly. Alison, soon himself to be involved in building Egypt's new army, had commanded the Highland Brigade at Tel-el-Kebir.[1] Could he recommend any able intelligent officers who would be willing to undertake the job of watching over the commissions? Alison had no hesitation: the young officer who had distinguished himself under his command was the man. To assist Macdonald and to act as interpreter, Malet lent a Mr. Cameron from the agency.[2] Macdonald was to be under the direct instruction of Sir Rivers Wilson, who was watching the proceedings of the main commission.

Macdonald swung into his task with an amazing zest and enthusiasm. During the first week of his appointment he visited 105 prisoners in the Zaptieh prison in Cairo, besides his commission duties, and expressed himself disgusted with the conditions in which they languished in the first of a sequence of forceful letters to Wilson:

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1. Regimental Records, H.L.I., p.125.
2. F.O. 141/168. Dufferin to Granville, 22.11.82.

> "...most of the prisoners in the Zaptieh, being of the poorer class and belonging to the lower grades of the late Egyptian army, are reduced to great straits to provide themselves with sustenance; several, though making no complaint of their treatment, state that having been so long in prison they have no money left and are reduced to selling their clothes to buy food."[1]

The pitiful state of these men determined Macdonald that the work of the sub-commission would at any rate be pushed on as fast as possible. The work output of the investigators doubled in the space of a week.[2] By the second week in December the backlog of cases had been cleared off with regard to those confined in the Zaptieh, and Wilson considered releasing Macdonald to his regimental duties.[3]

The end was only the beginning, however. In the first place, fast as the sub-commission had worked, the great flood of arrests, investigations and complaints by European residents was only just beginning, as law and order were restored in Lower Egypt. On December 17, the Egyptian Government found it necessary to appoint two new commissions to investigate the complaints at Tantah and Alexandria against people accused of being implicated in felonious crime, who were therefore not to be released in the Khedive's general amnesty for political prisoners issued in January 1883. Macdonald was an obvious

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1. F.O.C.P. 4727. Malet to Granville, 5.12.82, enc. Macdonald to Wilson.
2. F.O.C.P., loc. cit.
3. F.O. 141/170, Dufferin to Macdonald, 11.12.82.

choice to sit on one of the commissions and accordingly left for Tantah on December 30.[1] Secondly, Macdonald was having his first painful experiences of Egyptian officialdom. The "whirlwind" who had passed through the Zaptieh prison reported ruefully on his visit a fortnight later than the conditions of the prisoners seemed to have worsened rather than improved. Many prisoners complained of want of food. Wilson asked Malet to remonstrate with Ismail, the Minister of the Interior, which "would have good effect".[2] The British officers were beginning to see the enormity of the task which lay ahead, merely in punishing the offenders of the past year, let alone repairing the ravages of previous years.

While Macdonald was engaged at Tantah, circumstances were to change his whole position. On January 9, Malet informed the Foreign Office that Major Chermside, military attaché to the Cairo agency, had resigned to take up an appointment in the newly formed Egyptian army under Wood.[3] The Foreign Office suggested to the War Office that the General Officer Commanding in Egypt, who, since Wolseley's return home, had been Alison, should select a new attaché to serve under Malet. The War Office agreed.[4] Hardly had the instruction

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1. F.O. 141/170. Wilson to Malet and Dufferin, 1.1.83. Also, Parliamentary Papers 1883 LXXXIII, Correspondence on Egypt, Dufferin to Granville, 15.1.83.
2. F.O. 141/165. Wilson to Malet 16.12.82, including Macdonald to Wilson verbatim.
3. F.O. 141/174 Malet to Granville, 9.1.83.
4. F.O. 141/171 Pauncefote to Malet, 1.2.83.

reached Alison when he received a letter from Malet. Wilson was to return to England, leaving the number of officers available to serve on the commissions pitifully small. If Macdonald returned home with his regiment on February 7, it would cause considerable inconvenience. When Malet added that he would be glad if Macdonald were to be permitted to undertake the military business of the agency as well, the appointment was as good as made.[1] Alison completely approved Malet's suggestion; he had after all been the first to recommend the employment of Macdonald for special service. On February 13, Macdonald took up his first diplomatic appointment, as envoy for the agency to the Egyptian government on matters military.

At the beginning of March, most of the preliminary work of the Tantah Commission being complete, Macdonald took Wilson's place at the Alexandria court martial.[2] Now at the centre of judicial proceedings, and overseer over the officers sitting at the other commissions (two more had been appointed in January, Damanhour and Mehallet-el-Kebir, making four in all), Macdonald became far more aware of the intense pressure being exercised in favour of certain of the prisoners by the Egyptian Government, even to the extent of instructions being issued to the court to acquit certain highly favoured men. This caused

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1. F.O. 141/188 Malet to Alison, 3.2.83.
2. F.O. 141/185 Macdonald to Malet, 5.3.83.

the resignation of the only two European members of the court martial on May 10. Activity on behalf of the prisoners was not confined to the Egyptian Government. Lord Dufferin was asked to intervene in the judicial proceedings on more than one occasion by European counsel, but declined on the ground that if he once began to interfere "he did not see when his interference might end".[1]

When Dufferin left Egypt on May 3, Macdonald lost an able defender on the spot; nevertheless the work of the commission and court martial was pushed on apace throughout May. His regular report to Malet on June 6 showed one or two signs of strain and was illustrative of the problems under which he laboured. At Tantah, he says, the number of cases has increased owing to the recent return of many Europeans who have only now been able to bring their cases before the commission. The statements of a number of these he found to be untrue, and therefore he had to intervene personally to see that the accused got every benefit of the doubt. The Mehallet-el-Kebir commission was running into difficulties owing to the opposition of the Sheikhs, who prevented even willing villagers from giving evidence for fear of being implicated in the massacres of last year, also from hatred of Christians. The Christians were un-

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1. F.O.C.P. 4859. Dufferin to Granville, 28.4.83.

willing to come forward for fear of losing Arab custom and of creating another disturbance. Another cause of delay was want of a proper prison, which allowed stories to be concocted between defendants. Macdonald goes on to deplore the introduction of European lawyers into the commissions, who produce "considerable delay for the purpose of benefitting themselves". It was a very gloomy report, altogether unlike his usual style. Even the suggestion with which it closes, that "as soon as the murder cases and the more serious pillage cases have been enquired into, the remainder be dismissed (trivial cases); the more so as the accused have already suffered three or four months' imprisonment before being released on bail, and because the cost of maintaining the four commissions and the court martial is a considerable drain on the money resources of the country", seems prompted as much by desire for humanity to himself as to the prisoners.[1]

Macdonald was soon to have an unwonted rest from commission work for two reasons: Ramadan and cholera. The commissions were suspended by order of the Minister of the Interior during Ramadan on July 1, the court martial was adjourned on the 12th. This was only the recognition of an accomplished fact, since the clerks went on strike and the

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1. F.O.C.P. 4859. Malet to Granville, 6.6.83, including Macdonald to Malet.

witnesses disappeared. Far more serious was the outbreak of cholera at the beginning of June. This spread rapidly, and put an effective end for the moment to judicial proceedings. At Mehallet the eleven remaining cases were released on bail.[1] On July 23, Macdonald went to Cairo to assist Malet in coping with the epidemic, which by then had assumed crisis proportions.[2]

On August 9, Macdonald left Cairo as the official representative on a mission led by the British army surgeon Hunter to advise the Egyptians in the towns on sanitation measures to be taken to prevent the epidemic spreading.[3] The three day tour round Lower Egypt which he undertook at the Egyptian Government's expense enabled him to gain a wider knowledge of Egypt than had been possible through commission work. Even though the worst of the epidemic was over by the second week in August, Macdonald retained a vivid impression of what he saw in his report to Malet[4], which at the same time inured him to his later experiences in West Africa. While at Tantah, the streets had at least been swept and whitewashed, thanks to the activities of the Professor of Anatomy at Cairo University, Mehallet was far more typical. Nothing had been done "from a

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1. F.O.C.P. 4877. Malet to Granville, 16.7.83, containing reports by Macdonald.
2. F.O. 141/174. Malet to Granville, 30.7.83.
3. F.O. 141/176. Malet to Granville, 8.8.83.
4. F.O. 141/176. Malet to Granville, 13.8.83, enc. Macdonald to Malet.

sanitary point of view"; "the hospital so called was one of the dirtiest filthiest buildings I have visited in Egypt"; the town was without medicines and people in many instances died where they fell in the streets. In the cemetery at Mansourah the graves, through being hurriedly constructed had cracked in the sun "and the smell of dead cholera bodies was very unpleasant." Hygienic measures were everywhere obstructed by the notables on religious grounds. Because of this, where areas had been cordoned off to isolate the disease, it leapt the barriers. There was everywhere a shortage of doctors, and often a deadly smell of decaying bodies.

The mission did have its positive side, however. Macdonald reports with some humour how at Samanhoud, news of their probable arrival having been wired to the authorities, the streets through which the mission would most likely pass were undergoing a process of whitewashing, as also were the walls of the town, which could be seen from the railway. He also says that, bad though conditions were in most of the towns which he had visited, before, they were in fact cleaner or becoming so. Nevertheless he regarded the subsidence of the epidemic as in great measure due to the rise of the Nile.[1]

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1. F.O. 141/176. Malet to Granville, 13.8.83, enc. Macdonald to Malet.

The epidemic had subsided sufficiently by August 27 for the court martial to resume its sittings, followed by the commissions two days later.[1] Despite sanguine estimates by Macdonald, that "little work of a serious nature remains to be done",[2] their work was to drag on for another five months, this despite a general amnesty in October.[3] Macdonald's impatience for the trials to come to an end did not stem purely from self-interest; as he revealed to Malet, he felt that "in addition to the cost they /the commissions/ are to the country, they encourage the low class of Europeans to get up charges against the natives with a view of extorting money from them."[4]

At last Baring was able to state, in response to an inquiry from Granville,[5] that Macdonald's work in connection with the trials was over, coupling this reply with a plea that he might be allowed to retain his services.[6] Given the disaster of Hicks Pasha in November 1883, the loss of the Sudan which had brought on a political crisis in January with the

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1. F.O.C.P. 4877. Malet to Granville, 3.9.83.
2. Ibid.
3. F.O.C.P. 4877. Baring to Granville, 23.9.83, enc. by Macdonald.
4. F.O.C.P. 4877. Malet to Granville, 3.9.83, enc. by Macdonald.
5. F.O. 141/189. Granville to Baring, 29.1.84.
6. F.O. 802/649. Baring to Granville, 9.2.84.

resignation of the Cherif ministry,[1] and the decision to send General Gordon to evacuate the beleaguered garrisons in the Sudan on January 18, the government were not prepared to demur at any of Baring's reasonable requests, least of all to deny the necessity of the post of military attaché.

The tale of disaster was not however complete. On February 4, General Baker was routed with a new Egyptian army by Osman Digna and the Dervishes in the Eastern Sudan. Sinkat and Tokar fell, and a British force in the Red Sea port of Suakin was besieged.[2] Gordon was therefore virtually cut off in Khartoum. Baker himself barely escaped with his life.

With Baring's permission, Macdonald volunteered to take part as an observer in an expedition under Sir Gerald Graham to relieve the British force besieged in Suakin. The force achieved little beyond its immediate objective, fighting two engagements at El Teb (February 29) and Tamai (March 13).

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1. In 1881 a native of Dongola, proclaimed himself Mahdi and raised a revolt. In her own troubles, there was little Egypt could do to check it. An army sent under Hicks Pasha, an Englishman, was cut to pieces on November 5, 1883. Therefore the British government, which had hitherto insisted the Sudan was Egypt's responsibility, faced facts and ordered the Egyptians to abandon the Sudan. This unpopular diktat brought on the political crisis, and made it certain that all hope of an immediate withdrawal from Egypt would have to be abandoned, although ministers continued to talk of it. For fuller accounts, see P.M.Holt, The Mahdist State in the Sudan 1881-1898 (1958); Robinson, Gallagher & Denny, Africa and the Victorians (1963).

2. W.O. 33/40. Wolseley to Hartington, 8.2.84.

Macdonald, serving with the 1st Battalion of the Black Watch "distinguished" himself on the former occasion[1], and managed to get himself wounded on the latter, not however seriously.[2] He received as his souvenirs of the campaign, two additional clasps to go on the Khedive's medal. When he returned to Cairo on March 20, Baring immediately sent him home on a well-earned leave.

When Macdonald returned to Egypt in September, he found the unsettled aspect and feverish activity of the 1883 days had largely disappeared. Baring was now fully in control and Macdonald's remaining years at the agency in Cairo must have seemed by comparison with what had gone before excessively dull; yet they were important years for the development of his character. In them he learnt administrative routine, the routine of a busy agency, and there was no better schoolmaster in this art than Baring, and no more testing school than Cairo. Macdonald's task as military attaché was basically to act as an envoy between the agency and the officer commanding the Egyptian army (in this case an English officer, General Stephenson); also to deal with routine military matters on

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1. W.O. 33/42. Graham to War Office, 26.3.84.
2. W.O. 25/3473. Casualties Suakim-Tamaneb, 13.3.84.

behalf of Baring. This could mean anything from arranging indemnities due to the heirs of British officers who accompanied Hicks [redacted][1] to recouping travelling expenses for British officers serving in the Egyptian army.[2] Baring seemed however to treat Macdonald somewhat as the agency odd-job man. This at least had the virtue of widening his experience. Prison visiting was continued as a matter of course, since it was a field in which Macdonald had by now acquired a very special expertise. The erudite reports which were sent in to Baring were passed on to Crookshank, the Inspector General of Prisons for the Egyptian Government (1884-6), and greatly appreciated.[3] In a widely different field, a lengthy report on the progress of the petroleum borings at Gebel Zeit near Suez earned both Baring's and Iddesleigh's appreciation in the Foreign Office.[4] Macdonald's experience of commission work was utilised further when he was appointed a member of a commission in March 1887 to try Egyptians concerned in personal attacks made on British officers.[5] His suggestion that British officers should carry

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1. F.O. 141/204. Baring to Nubar Pasha, 19.12.84.
2. F.O. 141/204. Baring to Nubar Pasha, 17.10.84.
3. e.g. F.O. 141/241. Macdonald to Baring with inclusion 10.6.86.
4. F.O.C.P. 5365. Baring to Iddesleigh, 9.12.86, F.O. 141/234 Baring to Iddesleigh 27.12.86 with inclusion by Macdonald, F.O. 141/242 Pauncefote to Baring 5.1.87.
5. P.P. 44/1887. XCII. Correspondence respecting attacks made on two officers, etc.

passes when out alone, and should be accompanied by an interpreter to avoid unnecessary incidents was in fact adopted.[1] Only the fall of Kassala to the Mahdists in 1885 prevented Macdonald being sent on a personal mission to the King of Abyssinia, whom the British government was trying to utilise to effect the evacuation of the beleaguered garrisons in the eastern Sudan after the death of Gordon at Khartoum.[2] The Egyptian government appreciated Macdonald's services enough to award him the 4th Class Osmanieh.

It was small wonder therefore that when Salisbury informed Baring on April 1887 that the War Office felt that the appointment of military attache was no longer necessary, as the native army was now officered by Englishmen and there was an intelligence department on the H.Q. staff at Cairo,[3] Baring was somewhat alarmed. In his reply to Salisbury, Baring argued that Macdonald's duties went far beyond those of military attache, indeed these were the smallest part of his work. Questions were constantly being raised between the Egyptian government and British military authorities, requiring "an officer of tact and discretion, whose opinion carries weight". The task "of the agency would be rendered more difficult by losing so valuable a member of my staff as Major Macdonald."

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1. Ibid.; see also F.O. 141/245 for relevant correspondence.
2. F.O.C.P. 5167. Further correspondence respecting affairs of Egypt, July-September 1887.
3. F.O. 141/242. Pauncefote to Baring, 8.4.87.

Baring obviously saw the writing on the wall, but pleaded to be allowed to retain his attaché until February 1888, when he would have completed five years' work in the agency.[1] In a sense the logic of the argument escaped Baring. If Macdonald was doing work other than that of a military attaché, why should the War Office continue to pay him? The work could have been done just as easily by a civilian. Thus, while the Foreign Office was prepared to support Baring, the War Office returned a flat negative,[2] and Macdonald prepared to pack his bags for home.

Again chance was to intervene, this time to complete Macdonald's conversion away from an army career. Sir John Kirk, after a long tenure of the agency in Zanzibar, had retired in 1885 because of ill health. This left an awkward gap before Colonel Euan Smith, the succeeding Consul General, whose appointment was gazetted to begin from Kirk's official retirement in 1887, could take up his post. This gap was partially filled by the Vice-Consul on the spot, Holmwood, who by March 1887 had made himself for various reasons <u>persona non grata</u> with the German community. Berlin suggested that it would be regarded as a friendly act if he were recalled,[3] and as a

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1. F.O. 141/245. Baring to Salisbury, 22.4.87.
2. F.O. 802/4066. F.O. to W.O. 4.5.87; W.O. to F.O. 26.5.87.
3. Salisbury Private Papers A/61. Scott to Salisbury, 29.4.87.

gesture of goodwill the Foreign Office agreed.[1] The question was whom to send in his place, as Colonel Euan Smith was not expected to be ready to fill the post for anything up to another six months. The Foreign Office, working on the basis that Cairo was more than halfway to Zanzibar, and therefore a replacement could be sent quickly, also that from the great number of British officers in Egypt one should surely be available, wired to Baring for suggestions. Colonel Kitchener, in the process of reorganizing the Egyptian defences on Wadi Halfa, expressed himself as "not anxious to go",[2] when asked. Baring therefore, anticipating Macdonald's recall, strongly recommended him for the post: "He has great tact and judgement, speaks German well and gets on particularly well with Germans."[3] After digesting this for nearly three weeks, the Foreign Office agreed to his suggestion on June 13,[4] and Macdonald left Cairo for Zanzibar on June 21.[5]

Despite the urgency of settling the question of who was to go to Zanzibar, one could understand the Foreign Office's initial hesitation. Here was an officer who had had little or

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1. Ibid. A/61. Scott to Salisbury, 3.5.87.
2. Ibid. A/52. Baring to Salisbury, 26.5.87.
3. Ibid.
4. F.O. 141/247. Salisbury to Clarke, 13.6.87.
5. F.O. 141/247. Clarke to Salisbury, 25.6.87.

no experience of international diplomacy, and the Zanzibar agency at this period was assuredly no sinecure. British interests in East Africa were largely a nineteenth-century development, connected with the suppression of the slave trade. To the extent that suppression was a sea-borne activity, exploration of the mainland had been slow. A stimulus had been given, however, by the writings and travels of David Livingstone who had revealed the existence of an internal East African slave trade to a horrified public in the 1850's and 1860's. The cure was the same as that applied to West Africa: the interior must be penetrated by missionaries, settlers and traders. Throughout the 1860's and 1870's intense efforts were made by missionaries of all denominations to establish stations near the lakes. Although the prospects for trade did not appear good, a few traders began to appear on the coast, and in 1872 William Mackinnon, a self-made Glasgow businessman, began running a regular steamship service between Britain and Zanzibar.

Meanwhile the efforts of the Royal Navy were beginning to bear some fruit. Their attack on the slave trade was made somewhat easier by the small number of political authorities with whom it was found necessary to do business. Since the seventeenth century the most important of these authorities, the Omani dynasty, centred on Muscat, had been extending its suzerainty further and further down the East coast of Africa,

pushing the Portuguese back on Mozambique. In 1840 the then ruler, Seyyid Said, moved his capital to Zanzibar, and proceeded to make it the commercial entrepot for the whole of the East African trade. By 1870 the hegemony of Zanzibar on the east coast extended from Samu and Kismayu in the north to Cape Delgado in the south. This hegemony not only presented possibilities for the British to deal in the east coast trade, but also provided the opportunity to build up the paramountcy of British influence in the region through the Sultan. Thus in 1873, under threat of naval bombardment, SultanBarghash was persuaded to sign a decree outlawing the slave trade throughout his dominions, and Sir John Kirk was appointed the first British consul for Zanzibar.

For the next ten years the personality of Sir John Kirk, and his friendship with the Sultan, ensured a steady growth in British influence. In 1875 the Sultan himself visited England and no effort was spared to make sure that he was suitably impressed with her might. Under the influence of Kirk, the Sultan built up an efficient army with a British naval officer as General, began to modernize his government, and to rebuild Zanzibar town with a water supply and well-lit streets.[1]

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1. For a fuller account of the growth of British influence in East Africa see Oxford History of East Africa, Vol. 1, eds. R.Oliver & G. Mathew; R.Oliver, The Missionary Factor in East Africa, 1952; R.Coupland, The Exploitation of East Africa 1856-1890, 1939.

This pleasant family party was disturbed from two directions. From the south, Portugal, conscious that her territory in Africa might be worth something in the partition which was now taking place, proceeded to put forward claims to great areas of central Africa, based on titles which, as Lord Salisbury said, "were archaeological".[1] One of these claims involved Cape Delgado, part of the Sultan's territory. More serious from the British point of view was the intervention of Germany. As part of the general process of putting pressure on Britain during 1884, Bismarck encouraged the aspirations of a group of traders and explorers led by Carl Peters, whose manifesto stressed the urgent need for direct action before other powers swallowed the whole of Africa. After a brief three-week expedition in East Africa, Peters arrived in Zanzibar on December 17 with a fistful of treaties which allegedly placed Usagara, Ungulu, Uzigua and Ukami, all in territory claimed by the Sultan, under German protection. At the same time, colleagues of Peters, the brothers Denhardt, were negotiating with Witu to the north. Returning to Berlin, on February 17, Peters succeeded in obtaining an Imperial charter of protection to administer the territories which he had gained by treaty.[2] Following this up, Germany bludgeoned the Sultan

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1. R.C.K. Ensor, England 1870-1914, p.192.

2. Oxford History of East Africa, p.369; Hertslet, Map of Africa by Treaty, II pp.682 ff.

into accepting the fait accompli by an ultimatum that he should withdraw his troops and agents from territory under German protection (August 11 1885)[1], and concluded by obtaining a treaty which provided for most favoured nation standing for Germany and for the establishment of consuls.[2]

With the British position in ruins, negotiation was the only road by which something at least could be salvaged. The result was the Anglo-German agreement, ratified by an exchange of notes on November 1 1886. By it, the Sultan of Zanzibar was left with a minimal sovereignty over a coastal belt ten miles deep, stretching from the Minengani river to Kipini, plus immediate sovereignty over the islands of Zanzibar and Pemba. All the rest of his territory on the mainland was partitioned; Witu and the area south of the Wanga river was to be under German influence, and an area extending roughly to modern Kenya under British. This agreement was forced on the Sultan.[3]

The Anglo-German partition undertaken largely at the prompting and in the interests of Mackinnon, Hutton and the Manchester merchants, was an attempt to achieve a settlement within the limits of traditional policy. Action must not involve the government in any expense or direct responsibility.

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1. Hertslet, loc.cit.
2. Hertslet, op.cit. I pp.320-322.
3. F.O.C.P. 6294. Memo by Hertslet, January 1893.

The obvious way to fulfil these requirements was to hand over the British sphere to private concessionaires to administer. In May 1887, Mackinnon negotiated a concession with the Sultan to develop and administer his territories on the mainland.[1] Eighteen months later he received a royal charter for his British East Africa Association, which then became the Imperial British East Africa Company.

Thus when Macdonald arrived in Zanzibar on July 12,[2] affairs were still in a state of flux. The Mackinnon concession was hardly dry on the paper, the Sultan was still trying to adjust to a radically smaller domain, and both the Portuguese and the Germans were busily intriguing to make it even smaller. To meet problems such as he had never met before, Macdonald had only his tact and discretion, his activity (he was just thirty-five) and his knowledge of German. It was small wonder that an associate of Mackinnon's asked that Holmwood be allowed to remain "as new man will complicate dealing with Sultan".[3]

After being presented to the Sultan on July 15, Macdonald duly took over the agency on the following day.[4] The largest file which awaited attention on his desk was the one

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1. Hertslet, op.cit. I pp.339-345.
2. F.O.C.P. 5536. Holmwood to Salisbury, 14.7.87.
3. F.O.C.P. 5536. G.S.Mackenzie to Foreign Office, 14.7.87.
4. F.O.C.P. 5536. Holmwood to Salisbury, 14.7.87; Macdonald to Salisbury, 16.7.83.

conderning the dispute with Portugal. Delusions of grandeur had prompted Portugal not only to take a leaf out of the German book but to go one better. When the Sultan rejected the Portuguese claim to Tungi Bay and Minengani, the Governor of Mozambique on instructions from Lisbon seized it with his fleet, after a day-long bombardment, in which the property of a number of British Indian subjects was damaged (February 1887)[1]. For this reason and by virtue of the agreement with Germany, which had recognised the Sultan's sovereignty south of the Rovuma river,[2] Britain was not disposed to accept the Portuguese claim. Macdonald was fortunate in that he could count on the support on this issue of his German colleague, Dr. Michahelles, who arrived on July 20.[3] Germany, having got what she wanted out of Britain in East Africa, was committed to a policy of good neighbourliness; moreover in view of the fact that Peters was attempting to get from the Sultan[4] what Mackinnon had achieved in May in the way of concessions in the ten-mile strip, the Portuguese claim did affect, albeit marginally, the German sphere of influence. The Sultan, not being completely unaware of the relative strengths of the European powers, refused to accept the Portuguese fait accompli as he had been forced to accept the German.

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1. F.O.C.P. 5536. Macdonald to Salisbury, 1.8.87.
2. F.O.C.P. Memo by Hertslet, January 1893.
3. F.O.C.P. 5536. Macdonald to Salisbury, 21.7.87.
4. Ibid.

Unable to get recognition of force majeure, Portugal tried diplomacy. She agreed to direct negotiations with the Sultan so that her claims might be recognized, and appealed to the good offices of Britain and Germany to assist in bringing about a settlement. The delimitation commission to draw the boundary between Portugal and Zanzibar held its first meeting at Zanzibar on July 21, five days after Macdonald had taken over the agency. The Portuguese Commissioner claimed all territory south of Cape Delgado, including Tungi and Minengani, on the basis of history and possession before 1854.[1] By the Anglo-German agreement Macdonald and his German colleague could do nothing but oppose this move.

Macdonald's first steps in international diplomacy were understandably tentative and betrayed signs of nervousness. To an army man, schooled to carrying out orders to the letter, the delicate manoeuvring between alternatives, and the sometimes necessary seizure of initiative by the man on the spot within the context of broad instructions from London, constituted a new experience. This may have accounted for the unwonted activity of the Zanzibar wire during the early days, which prompted the dry comment from Anderson that "Macdonald is spending a lot of money in telegrams."[2] Nevertheless, no one

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1. F.O.C.P. 5536. Macdonald to Salisbury, 22.7.87.
2. F.O.C.P. 5536. Macdonald to Salisbury, 31.7.87, minute by H.P. A., 1.8.87.

could claim that the Foreign Office was not, as a result, exceptionally well-informed. As far as the Portuguese dispute was concerned, it proved unamenable to settlement in Zanzibar. On August 6 the commissioners reached deadlock;[1] Portugal refused arbitration,[2] but consented to direct negotiations between Britain, Germany and herself in Lisbon, agreeing that she should abstain from hostilities in the meantime.[3] This reduced Macdonald to the role of supplier of information, and put the conduct of negotiations in more experienced hands. In this role Macdonald performed excellent service, and was evidently more at ease. The dry note of humour began to creep back into his correspondence, and a certain fluency compared with the stiffness and uncertainty of a few weeks before. Thus he wrote in answer to Salisbury's instruction to ascertain whether there were any terms of arrangement or compromise, short of an absolute surrender by Portugal, which would be acceptable to the Sultan:[4]

> "Had audience with Sultan. Although placing himself in our hands he was quite of the opinion he could sweep Portugal from the coast by preaching a jihad. I pointed out to the Sultan the inconvenience of this proceeding....."[5]

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1. F.O.C.P. 5536. Petre to Salisbury, 6.8.87.
2. F.O.C.P. 5536. Macdonald to Salisbury, 20.8.87.
3. F.O.C.P. 5536. Petre to Salisbury, 17.9.87.
4. F.O.C.P. 5536. F.O. to Macdonald, 12.9.87.
5. F.O.C.P. 5536. Macdonald to Salisbury, 26.9.87.

Macdonald reported that the Sultan would feel very keenly the loss of both Minengani and Tungi,[1] not so much on account of the actual loss of territory as because of the loss of prestige in the eyes of his Arab subjects.[2] This did nevertheless suggest a possible compromise to Salisbury: one of the two places named to either side.[3] On November 7, in agreement with Germany[4], he suggested officially to Portugal that she should retain Minengani and restore Tungi, linking this with a claim for compensation for those rendered destitute by the bombardment of Minengani, "without which no settlement can be considered satisfactory by Her Majesty's Government", and for a 3 per cent. fixed transit duty through Mozambique for the settlements in the neighbourhood of Nyassa. Petre, ambassador at Lisbon, was instructed to suggest also that if Portugal could not accept the proposed division of territory, an equitable solution might be found in money.[5] To all this, on December 12, Portugal said no: latitude 10 degrees 40 minutes was her irreducible minimum; all she would undertake to do was to apply the Zanzibar tariff for ten years.[6]

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1. F.O.C.P. 5536. Macdonald to Salisbury, 13.9.87.
2. F.O.C.P. 5536. Macdonald to Salisbury, 24.10.87.
3. F.O.C.P. 5536. Macdonald to Salisbury, 13.9.87, minute by Salisbury.
4. F.O.C.P. 5565. Salisbury to Malet, 24.10.87.
5. F.O.C.P. 5565. Salisbury to Petre, 7.11.87.
6. F.O.C.P. 5565. Petre to Salisbury, 12.12.87.

Meanwhile Macdonald, hunting through the agency archives, had come up with an interesting piece of information. In 1862 the Portuguese Governor of Mozambique had come to Zanzibar to negotiate a commercial treaty with the late Sultan. After terms had been agreed, the Governor proposed an additional article, suggesting an alteration of Zanzibar's southern boundary northward to Cape Delgado - a proposal identical to that of the Portuguese commissioners on July 21 1887. The Sultan had then refused, and the Portuguese Governor had signed the treaty without the boundary article. The importance of this information could not be gainsaid. It showed that the Portuguese in 1862 had asked for Tunghi Bay as a concession and did not claim it as a right.[1]

Why, therefore, was Macdonald's information never used? More particularly, why was the case against Portugal first allowed to hang fire and then to be quietly dropped during the early months of 1888? It is true that the British government attempted to obtain compensation for the British Indian traders at Minengani, but the attempt was half-hearted. It was a far cry from the instruction to Petre on November 7, that he was to obtain compensation as a sine qua non for a settlement , to Salisbury's note of June 5 1888 to the Chief Clerk at the

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1. F.O.C.P. Macdonald to Salisbury, 21.11.87.

Foreign Office to draft a representation to Lisbon making the case as strong as possible, but admitting that according to the rigid interpretation it was not a matter of absolute claim.[1] Cosseted in this way, Portugal was bound to refuse.[2] Moreover, Macdonald's information, so important in December, was allowed to moulder in the Foreign Office for six months before the drafts to Lisbon were cancelled.[3]

The reason for the government's sudden lack of interest was obvious. The Portuguese-Zanzibar dispute was on the fringe of Britain's main quarrel with Portugal over Central Africa, with which Salisbury was increasingly occupied. Cape Delgado was swallowed up by Mashonaland and was largely forgotten in the events leading to the Anglo-Portuguese settlement of 1890. Having squeezed Portugal hard over Central Africa, the few square miles round Cape Delgado were insignificant, but nevertheless had concession value to make the rest of the agreement more palatable to Portugal. Moreover, by virtue of the Anglo-German package deal of 1890, which placed Zanzibar under British protectorate, Britain could force any settlement on the Sultan. Accordingly the Portuguese-Zanzibar dispute was closed by a treaty between Britain and Portugal of June 11 1891, which gave the latter 10 degrees 40 minutes south as her boundary.[4]

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1. F.O.84/1922. Law Officers to Foreign Office, 2.6.88; minute by Salisbury 5.6.88.
2. As she did, F.O.C.P. 5770. Petre to Salisbury, 6.11.88.
3. F.O. 84/1922, 9.5.88. No.182 cancelled.
4. Hertslet, op.cit. III, p.1017. The wider context of the Portuguese dispute with Britain in East Africa may be studied in E.Axelson, Portugal & the Scramble for Africa 1875-91 Witwatersrand 1967 cf particularly cap.5.

Macdonald, throughout the Portuguese period of pressure on the Sultan, had had the support of his German colleague, who was content, in consonance with German policy, to leave the initiative with Macdonald. Although their relations with each other were therefore generally cordial, they were sometimes punctuated by short sharp disputes, particularly over the ill-defined boundary between the German and the British spheres of influence. Both consuls were hampered by the presence of erst-while empire-builders on the spot, Peters on the German side and Mackinnon on the British. Concessions which were gained from the Sultan by the one, in the new amity of Anglo-German relations, the other had to have too. The position was further complicated by the fact that both Mackinnon and Peters doubted the ability of the new consuls, and therefore did not always pass on the fullest information about their negotiations. Macdonald seems to have had more control over Mackinnon than Michahelles over Peters. Macdonald reports, for instance, that Michahelles seemed surprised to hear of the concession granted to the British East Africa Company by the Sultan on May 24, and even more surprised that the Sultan had granted a similar concession to Peters, at which Lister in the Foreign Office commented, "Michahelles had evidently not mastered his brief."[1]

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1. F.O.C.P. 5536. Macdonald to Salisbury, 21.7.87; also 31.7.87, minute by T.V.L.

What Peters did not tell Michahelles, which earned him a sharp reprimand from Berlin, was that his concession extended to Minengani, that is to the land in dispute between Zanzibar and Portugal.[1]

Given the characters of the two entrepreneurs and their associates, it was perhaps in the nature of things that friction should continue. Mackenzie accused the Witu Company of violating the agreed boundary between the two spheres of influence[2]; the latter retaliated with a similar counter-accusation.[3] Inevitably the two governments were drawn in, Salisbury expressing apprehension about the Sultan's financial rights in the coastal areas,[4] and Bismarck stating that if anybody's boundary had been violated, it was the Sultan's and not the British.[5] Since neither government was concerned to provoke conflict through this medley of claims and counter-claims[6], efforts were made both in London and Berlin to take some of the heat out of the questions at issue. By the end of 1887 broad agreement had been reached on most issues. Direct

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1. F.O.C.P. 5536. Scott to Salisbury, 29.8.87.
2. F.O.C.P. 5536. Mackenzie to F.O., 14.7.87.
3. F.O.C.P. 5536. Macdonald to Salisbury, 27.8.87.
4. F.O.C.P. 5565. Note Verbale by Plessen, 18.9.87.
5. F.O.C.P. 5536. Malet to Salisbury, 21.9.87.
6. ~~See p. above.~~

negotiations were to be encouraged for the settlement of disputes on the spot both between German and British companies[1] and also between consuls.[2] As far as the boundaries between spheres were concerned, the Anglo-German agreement was reaffirmed.[3]

Macdonald had played his small part to the full in keeping Anglo-German relations in this part of Africa on an even keel. Not only were his personal relations with Michahelles eminently cordial,[4] but his support of the German consul, a man not renowned for his tact, in his frequent disputes with the German company, won the approval of Berlin.[5] At one time the relations between Peters' Company and Michahelles were so strained that the Company claimed the right to transact their affairs regardless of the consul general's interference, and to have direct communication with the Sultan and the English consul general. Macdonald, declining to intrigue, informed the Company that Michahelles was the "only person with whom I could hold official correspondence on any subject relating to German affairs".[6] His knowledge of German, also,

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1. F.O.C.P. 5565. Salisbury to Malet, 28.11.87.
2. F.O.C.P. 5560. Malet to Salisbury, 9.1.88.
3. F.O.C.P. 5565. F.O. to Macdonald, 31.10.87 et alia.
4. F.O.C.P. 5565. Macdonald to Salisbury, 29.8.87; 5560, Macdonald to Salisbury, 13.2.87.
5. F.O. 84/1915. Malet to Salisbury, 9.2.88.
6. F.O.C.P. 5565. Macdonald to Salisbury, 21.11.87.

had lessened the risk of misunderstanding from the employment of interpreters. Most of Macdonald's contact with Michahelles was direct and personal. The only cause of complaint which the Sultan had against both agencies was that he could no longer play off one against the other, because they were on such good terms.[1]

It had been originally intended that Euan-Smith would be ready to go out to take up his post in November.[2] His delayed arrival in March was largely due to the fact that he was in Paris, attempting as Lytton's assistant to negotiate in concert with the German representative an agreement with France to bring the French tariffs affecting Zanzibar into line with the German and British.[3] Since the French were in no hurry to conclude a commercial treaty with Zanzibar, and serious news had by now arrived from East Africa, Euan Smith left Paris on February 14 with little achieved beyond cordial exchanges.[4]

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1. Michahelles to Macdonald, inclusion in F.O.C.P. 5560, Macdonald to Salisbury, 19.1.88.

2. F.O. 84/1859. F.O. to War Office, 19.9.87.

3. F.O.C.P. 5565 & 5560 contain the correspondence over these abortive negotiations, which were never concluded - not surprisingly, as the French gained a commercial advantage by not doing so.

4. F.O.C.P. 5560. Lytton to Salisbury, 15.2.88.

The serious news which had arrived from East Africa was the illness of Sultan Barghash, resulting in his death on March 26,[1] Macdonald had informed London of the Sultan's bad health, in December, and his increasing incapacity to perform any business.[2] Although the Sultan took a rest cure with his brother sovereign in Muscat in February, it became increasingly clear that he could not last much longer.[3] This raised problems of a possible successor, and rendered Euan Smith's presence in Zanzibar imperative. With the inevitable intrigue amongst the four claimants to the throne, and the possible disturbances they could create, as well as the intrigues of the three interested European powers (Lytton had already reported on February 2 that two ships of the French navy had been dispatched to Zanzibar),[4] Zanzibar was no place for a relatively inexperienced diplomat acting on a temporary basis. Nevertheless, until Euan Smith's arrival, Macdonald did an excellent holding job. Both Britain and Germany agreed on the succession of the Sultan's brother Khalifa[6] against the preference of the

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1. F.O.C.P. 5560. Macdonald to Salisbury, 19.12.87.
2. F.O.C.P. 5565. Macdonald to Salisbury, 25.12.87. The Sultan had elephantiasis.
3. F.O.C.P. 5560. Macdonald to Salisbury, 11.2.88.
4. F.O.C.P. 5560. Lytton to Salisbury, 2.2.88.
5. F.O.C.P. 5560. Kirk to F.O., 16.2.88.
6. F.O.C.P. 5560. Salisbury to Macdonald, 15.2.88.

Sultan for his infant son. When he received his instructions, Macdonald sounded out Mathews, the Sultan's Commander in Chief (and in the realities of Zanzibar politics his right-hand man), and made sure of his support, and therefore that of the native army. He also consulted with Michahelles and arranged that there should always be a man-of-war in the Town harbour. Mathews,meanwhile, had consulted with the principal men of the Sultanate, who had stated that they would act in accordance with the wishes of Her Majesty's Government.[1] Thanks to the fact that Macdonald was prepared to take the lead amongst his colleagues and had made his arrangements in good time, Khalifa was peacefully installed, with general consent, on March 27, the morning after Barghash's death.[2]

At the final curtain, however, Macdonald was no longer in charge, Euan Smith having formally taken over on March 21. The latter's appreciation of Macdonald went beyond the mere thanks which courtesy required. Everything at the agency was found "correct and in order." There were no cases left requiring settlement that were "of a difficult or embarrassing character and British prestige has suffered no diminution."[3]

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1. F.O.C.P. 5673. Macdonald to Salisbury, 12.3.88.
2. F.O.C.P. 5560. Euan Smith to Salisbury, 27.3.88.
3. F.O.C.P. 5673. Euan Smith to Salisbury, 22.3.88.

As Macdonald made his way home he may have reflected on the future. For upwards of five years now he had been employed on special service and he must have viewed the prospect of returning to his regiment with mixed feelings. On the one hand the army was in his blood and it would be like going home again to experience the thrilling feeling of marching in tune to the pipes once again. On the other hand, he had been away from his regiment so long, that many of his colleagues would have gone, and there were many chances of promotion that would have been missed. Nevertheless a holiday in his homeland, only the second in eight years, would give him a chance to readjust himself.

CHAPTER 3

COMPANY, CONSUL, COLONY.....

That portion of the Niger Districts Protectorate not governed by the Royal Niger Company we may for convenience designate the Oil Rivers Protectorate, the name officially adopted in 1891. It was not a clearly defined area, its boundaries were deliberately left amorphous reflecting the government's uncertainty as to the future of the area. To the west lay the Colony and Protectorate of Lagos whose boundary, by a proclamation issued by Governor Griffiths in February 1886, extended to the right bank of the Benin River. No Lagos official, however, though it worth his while either to visit the Benin River and proclaim the fact or to inform any British official in the neighbouring area. Consular officers, therefore, continued to operate on the Benin.

There was equal confusion at the eastern extremity of the Protectorate. Here the neighbouring protectorate of the Cameroons was under foreign rule - that of Germany. In May 1885 both powers agreed to abstain from interfering in the other's sphere of influence, the demarcation line to run along the right bank of the Rio del Rey from its mouth to its source "thence striking direct to the left river of the Old Calabar or

Cross River, and terminating after crossing that river at the point about 9° 8' of longitude east of Greenwich."[1] Few people, however, knew exactly where the Rio del Rey was, much less had it ever been accurately surveyed. Moreover it became clear, after surveys by the Admiralty had eventually been made, that the Rio del Rey was not a river at all, but a vast estuary into which many small rivers emptied. Which one of these effluents was the actual boundary was to be a continual source of academic bickering between the two powers for the next few years, Germany claiming the Akpayafe River as the best customs boundary, Britain the Ndian River as the natural ethnographical boundary. In 1887 Vice Consul Johnston was sent to explore the estuary in an attempt to achieve agreement. He recommended the Ndian river not only on grounds of ethnography but also as a natural trading frontier.[2] The Germans refused to accept this and the matter was still unsettled in 1890.

If the Oil Rivers' boundaries with Lagos and the Cameroons were uncertain, those with the Niger Company were non-existent. Despite the pleas of the Liverpool merchants

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1. F.O.C.P. 5161. Granville to Munster 29.4.85 & Munster to Granville 7.5.85.

2. F.O.C.P. 5502. Report by Acting Consul Johnston of his Survey of the Rio del Rey 14.7.87.

that the Niger Company should be restricted in its activities to the region north of Onitsha,[1] the Foreign Office refused to consider any steps for dividing the Protectorate while there was any prospects of amalgamation between the merchants. This created continued problems in the delta region; supposedly the whole of the delta was covered by the Charter. This on a correct geographical interpretation would have given the Oil Rivers to the Niger Company. Logic, however, failed to enter the situation. The Oil Rivers were left outside the Company's sphere and so lost a greater part of their hinterland. The Company ruled an area extending from the left bank of the Nun mouth of the Niger to the left bank of the Forcados, effectively splitting into two the area under Consular administration. The medley of creeks criss-crossing the delta invited smuggling by the middlemen of the Oil Rivers, and the lack of any firm Foreign Office line invited conflict between the European merchants as to trading rights. Two particular pressure points were at Idu, a main oil collecting centre for New Calabar and Bonny; and in the Forcados, where the Company was accused of encroaching beyond its chartered rights.

At every river mouth in the area thus delimited, in response to the stimulus of trade with the European, a city

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1. F.O.84/1880 Lawrence M.P. to Fergusson enc. letter from African Association 3.3.87.

state had developed, with its own mechanism for maintaining law and order, and for providing the necessary security for commercial intercourse. The inhabitants of these states belonged to three distinct groups. To the west lay Benin, once the proud possessor of an empire extending from Lagos to Bonny; with its offshoot the Itsekiri state of Warri. In the centre were the Oil Rivers proper, astride which lay the Ijo states of Nembe (Brass), New Calabar and Bonny. To the east, and outside the Delta proper, but connected with it by inland creeks, lay the Efik kingdoms of Creek Town, Duke Town and Henshaw Town, known collectively as Old Calabar (Kalabari). These states had, before the coming of the European, been small, eking out a precarious existence by fishing. There was little land to support an agricultural economy based on cash crops. The fish was dried and exchanged for the products of the forest with the hinterland Ibo and Ibibio peoples. A remarkable revolution took place with the European requirement for, first, slaves, then palm oil. The states leapt in size from a few hundred to upwards of 5,000 inhabitants. With the aid of European firearms, the city states built up spheres of influence in the interior, seizing slaves to man their newly built trading canoes which carried the goods of the European to the markets and brought, after the abolition of the slave trade, the palm

oil products to the ships waiting off the coast.[1] As the economy of these states changed, so did their social and political structures, and no description of coastal politics would be sound without beginning with a few words on the social structure known as the 'House'.[2]

The House consisted of the extended family group, plus the slaves who had been captured to man the canoes, bound together in one large trading association under the head of the house, usually elected, who was known as the 'father'. As befitted an organisation devoted to commerce, it had a fluid social structure. An ambitious slave could, and often did, if he found favour with his father by his success in negotiating trading agreements with the European agents, make enough money to buy his own canoe, and could then rise to become sub-chief or even father of his own house. Sometimes subordinate houses were formed by traders providing their sons with their own canoes or by successful slaves. Each city state had many houses and sub-houses, and a man's wealth and political influence was judged by the number of canoes he controlled. The house had its own religious deities, full responsibility for looking after its members in sickness and old age, and [illegible]

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1. See Dike op.cit. also G.I.Jones 'The Trading States of the Oil Rivers' 1963 for detailed accounts of the interaction of economy and politics in this area.

2. For the origins of the house systems and their subsequent history see Jones op. cit.

equally disciplined and punished its own stock. Social mobility increasingly produced a class structure based on wealth. The heads of houses acted as an advisory council to the king, who was himself a wealthy trader and head of a house. The Court of Equity which existed in every river to adjust trade disputes with the European was formed of the most powerful of these heads of houses sitting alongside the white agents.

In so far as the house functioned as it ought, it was an admirable institution for the British merchants. It provided the necessary security for trading operations, and the equally necessary sanctions against trading offenders. The agent could deal with one man acting on behalf of his house instead of having to negotiate different rates with several. This limited the time which had to be spent on the deadly fever ridden coast. The British were quite prepared under these conditions to leave politics to the Africans, and to concern themselves with trade.

Even before 1885, however, there were signs that the times were changing. The strength of the house system, "the career open to talents," was in a sense also its weakness. In a power structure based solely on wealth the way was always open to the overmighty subject. New wealth had thrown to the surface new men, feared and envied by their rivals in the older houses. Competition to supply the needs of the white man

became increasingly bitter as the new men trespassed in the markets of the old in their avid search for greater riches. The weaker houses lost their prosperity, and sometimes even their independence, to the larger houses. In Bonny a disastrous situation arose when two houses, those of Anna Pepple and Manilla Pepple, accumulated more wealth than the royal house. A series of civil wars, which the king was powerless to prevent, rocked the state, ending in the withdrawal in 1869 of the Anna Pepple group under their vigorous leader Ja Ja to found a new state at Opobo. Ja Ja's geographical position enabled him to control the Bonny markets, and the resulting trade disputes caused continual unrest. In New Calabar a similar situation arose with an endemic feud between the Barboy and Amakiri groups.[1]

This breakdown in political authority represented a threat to trade prosperity which government could not ignore, but to which it had not yet evolved any coherent policy. No one in the Foreign Office had bothered to examine the practical implications of what the assumption of a protectorate over the Oil Rivers might mean. The only certainty lay in the fact that, whatever it did mean should involve the minimum cost

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1. Dike op.cit. cX.

combined with the maximum security to trade - hence the policy of using the chartered company as an instrument of government. Beyond this, past policy seemed to provide no precedent on which to base the future government of the Rivers. The term "protectorate" itself seemed incapable of close definition, having "different meanings in different circumstances and in the mouths of different persons."[1] To a European trader it meant protection against the African; to the African protection against the trader; to government protection of both against the foreigner.

With this confusion of aims, and faced with internal political instability on the coast, it was not surprising that the government's approach to this part of West Africa in 1886, was often inconsistent in theory and savoured of the expedient in practice. Like an Imperial Micawber waiting for something to turn up, the Foreign Office meddled and muddled and put off decision, until at last a succession of crises forced a radical re-thinking of West African policy during the last decade of the century.

Initially, however, all had progressed quite smoothly. In accordance with Article 34 of the VIth Chapter of the Final Act of the Berlin Conference, the Foreign Office had published

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1. Hall "A Treatise on the Foreign Powers and Jurisdiction of the British Crown" p.204 (Oxford 1894).

the notification of the Protectorate on the 5th June 1885, at the same time indicating that "measures for the administration of justice and the maintenance of peace and good order in the Niger Districts"[1] were being prepared. Saddled with what the Niger Company had not taken under its charter, these measures had now to be considered. There were two existing factors which had to be taken into account. One was the protection treaties signed by the various rulers of the Oil Rivers states, the other was the existing powers already possessed by the Consular officers through Orders in Council, notably those of 1872 and 1885.

The treaties, made for the most part by Consul Hewett, differed from those of the Niger Company in that they did not purport to transfer complete sovereignty. Most, however, conformed to a standard pattern. There were usually nine articles in the treaty - articles I, II and VI being of primary importance to the British as conceding protection, control of external relations and free trading for all countries. Naturally article VI aroused the most contention amongst the Oil Rivers' rulers, and in some treaties it had to be left out, notably those with the Brass men and Ja Ja. The government, at first, had not been unduly worried about the absence of the

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1. London Gazette 5.6.85.

free trade article in these treaties; the main concern in 1884 had been to preserve the rivers from European interference, and this was achieved by articles I and II. The commitment undertaken by the powers at Berlin to ensure free and fair trading to each other's nationals in newly acquired territories on the African littoral put the problem in a new light. A treaty without article VI was clearly incompatible with international commitments.

Articles III, IV and V elaborated the nature and extent of British jurisdiction, and the commitment of rulers to the same. Full jurisdiction was preserved to the protecting power over British and foreign subjects (III), and Britain was empowered to decide all disputes between the kings and chiefs themselves, between them and foreign traders, and inter-tribal conflicts which could not be settled amicably between the two parties. In return the chiefs bound themselves to assist the British officers in the execution of their duties, and to act upon their advice "in matters relating to the administration of justice, the development of the resources of the country, the interests of commerce, or in any other matter in relation to peace, order, and good government, and the general progress of civilisation." The treaty concluded with three 'minor' articles - VII freedom of religion, VIII the special treatment

and protection to be accorded to wrecks, and IX the date of operation of the treaty. Usually the date was taken "so far as may be practicable," from the date of its signature, and no time limit was given to its operation, although initially Brass, to quote one example, refused to sign for more than six months.[1]

A study of the treaties as they are worded reveals that Britain had certain legal rights of interference in the internal affairs of the native rulers which could have provided precedents for Crown Colony administration. Of particular importance here is article IV of the standard treaty which must be quoted in full:-

> All disputes between the Kings and Chiefs of .... or between them and British and foreign traders, or between the aforesaid Kings and Chiefs and neighbouring tribes which cannot be settled amicably between the two parties, shall be submitted to the British Consular or other officers appointed by Her Britannic Majesty to exercise jurisdiction in ..... territories, for arbitration and decision /my emphasis/ or for arrangement.

The two words 'and decision' virtually eliminated the legal distinction between a Crown Colony and a Protectorate. Arbitration itself bore no more force in international law than the willingness of the parties in dispute to submit that dispute to a third party for his opinion which when given none of the disputing parties were legally bound to accept. In a protectorate

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1. The treaties are to be found in Hertslet 'Map of Africa by Treaty' vol.I pp.131-154. Also F.O. 93/10, 11, 16.

government committed to non interference in native affairs, arbitration would be the maximum permissible intervention in internal affairs by the protecting power, whatever the legal position was vis-a-vis foreigh affairs. Article IV clearly went beyond this. Unlike arbitration, "decision" is a juridical term capable of jurisdictional interpretation.[1] Practically it implied the requisite force and the necessary bureaucracy to enforce the decision of a supreme court. By this clause the British government was the legal and final court of appeal in disputes between two parties both of which could be non-British. If Britain was empowered to intervene at the highest level, there was no logical stopping place between protectorate and colony. Other clauses on the treaty form pointed to more than mere protection. Clauses VI and VII presupposed such radical alterations in the existing structure of the Oil Rivers, as certainly to require some supervision from the protecting power. The treaties, therefore, were sufficiently ill-defined in their articles to allow of the establishment of a Crown colony without breaking those articles.

What induced the chiefs to sign away their rights for apparently such a small return? Presents and ignorance are too facile an answer - we are not dealing with a primitive ignorant

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1. F. Hodge, Consular Jurisdiction in the Niger Coast Protectorate, (1895).

savage only too ready to be duped by the European. Schooled by centuries of contact, the Oil Rivers man was well aware of the realities of life on the coast, and was as shrewd in trade matters, if not shrewder, than his opposite number the European agent. Of course, the chief did not expect to lose completely his independence and to become poorer into the bargain when he signed the treaty; on the contrary he sold some of his sovereignty because, in many cases, he expected to become rich by so doing. The white man's armed ships would provide security and protection in which trade could flourish more than ever before, and the Queen's government would control the excesses of the white agents. Again it was a small price to pay if they had to open their own markets, when they could trade in anybody else's. Certain of the chiefs signed away the political independence of their communities in order to strengthen their position against internal opponents. It has been mentioned above how the indigenous political structure was starting to break up; and the establishment of friendly relations with the greatest power on the coast could rehabilitate an ailing ruler. Finally the chiefs may have felt the writing was on the wall and they should make the best deal possible with the white man while they still had some shattered remnants of authority left: so used to aggression and counter aggression amongst

themselves, and the chastening influence of the gunboat on the coast, they would envisage a situation where this great power would do what any one of them would have done given the requisite power, that was to expand and create an empire. There is little evidence to suggest that the African saw the European in any different terms from the other successive conquering races who had moved through West Africa down the ages.[1] Clearly a treaty was one way out of a relationship which had become intolerable for both European and indigenous inhabitant. The realities of power politics were no less apparent to the African than the European, which in the general uncertainty as to the economic future of the rivers (the price of oil on the European market during 1884-5 reached rock bottom; even the well organised Niger Company sustained a loss of £40,000 on the year's trading and could not pay any dividend to its shareholders),[2] may have accounted for the request for more Queen's government. The fact that the uncertainty reached crisis proportions between 1885-9 was largely owing to the inability of the British government to accept their responsibilities and meet that request.[3]

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1. There is an interesting discussion of this point in Crowder, "West Africa under Colonial Rule" 1968 particularly part I passim.

2. Flint pp.325-6.

3. For a different interpretation of the treaty question see Anene op.cit. cap.3.

If the treaties imposed certain responsibilities on the British government, so too did the various Orders in Council under which the Consuls operated. The two relevant to our discussion, one of 1872 the other of 1885[1], revealed the confusion surrounding the establishment of the Protectorate, for the later document conferred few new powers on the Consul. He was to hold consular court as before, with direct jurisdiction over British subjects. The Order specifically empowered the consul to act "in so far as is necessary for securing the observance of the treaties" - a phrase which could mean everything or nothing. The Consul was also empowered to make regulations for securing "the peace and good government of British subjects or British protected persons." If regulations were made presumably the requisite power ab juridicio to enforce them was implied; a legal view which could hardly be squared, with or without treaty, with the continued independence of the native power. Given the treaty, however, the 1885 Order logically followed, as the chiefs had already signed away their political independence, and were probably not unaware that they had done so. They had been used to Consular Courts, set up under the 1872 Order, exercising an unofficial jurisdiction

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1. For texts see F.O.84/1356 Livingstone to Granville 29.4.72 & London Gazette 5.6.85.

over internal affairs before 1885, when Britain had no legal standing in the Rivers. The formal protectorate administration was marked, therefore, by no decisive change in practice. Hewett renamed his existing courts, notified the inhabitants that Britain was now the protecting power, which he trusted would "be considered sufficient for the purposes"[1] of the new Order, and continued to interfere in internal politics on the coast as he had done before - this time, however, with a locus standi, the treaty.

That the British government envisaged no decisive change was revealed in the instructions given to Hewett in November 1885, before he returned to his post after a prolonged leave. He was to restore "order, good administration and government" in an area larger than Great Britain! To achieve this small task he was to have no army, and no revenue, although if he was fortunate he might find himself with an occasional gunboat to supply the necessary moral pressure.[2] It was not surprising that Hewett soon ran into difficulties. The task set was far beyond the capacities of one man or even two, as Hewett now had a Vice-Consul in the person of Johnston. Further difficulties were created by the failure of the two men to pull

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1. F.O. 84/1749 Hewett to F.O. 15.4.86.
2. F.O. 84/1701 F.O. to Hewett 30.12.85.

together. It was not that their personal relationship was bad, but Hewett's inability to delegate, combined with Johnston's unwillingness to accept the passive role which the older man had mapped out for him, was not exactly a mixture making for success. Finally the Foreign Office, in pursuit of its long term objective of passing the Rivers off under company rule, was often completely oblivious to the advice and recommendations of its men on the spot. When Hewett pressed to be allowed to create a consular police force, and suggested that there was enough revenue to be gleaned from trade to erect a colonial administration and make it pay, Anderson minuted "this ..... sudden activity against the Co. at the present moment is very unfortunate.....I suspect Hewett thinks we are going to make the Oil Rivers a Colony and is playing for the Governorship."[1] Johnston likewise wanted the area to be made into a colony and was just as patently ignored.[2]

Given the lack of precision in the wording of the treaties, it was not surprising that Hewett's difficulties began over a treaty. The treaty signed with Ja Ja in 1884 was on a standard form, except for the omission of clause VI.[3] This was an important omission, in that in the midst of an avowedly

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1. F.O. 84/1881 Hewett to F.O. 5.11.88 min. by H.P.A. 9.11.88.
2. F.O. 84/1882 Johnston to Salisbury 26.7.88.
3. Text given in Anene, Appendix C pp.333-335.

free trade area (under the terms of the Berlin Act)[1] there existed a dominion built up by an enterprising ex-slave on the basis of protection, and the possession of the inland markets as a peculiar form of private property.[2] Hence, in the absence of extraordinary forebearance on the part of the white trader, there was bound to be trouble which could not but affect the whole stability of the middleman system on the coast.

It is not intended here to go into considerable detail over the events leading up to the deportation of Ja Ja by Johnston in September 1887. The story which "on the one hand raised the whole question of British control in the Oil Rivers Protectorate, and on the other touched the deepest animosities existing between the British commercial interests in the region"[3] has been well enough told elsewhere.[4] It is important, however, for a discussion of the political implications arising from the dispute to touch on the background. When Hewett returned to the Oil Rivers in 1885, Ja Ja was already involved in the most serious of his periodic trade disputes with the Liverpool merchants. To meet the world depression in oil prices, the merchants had banded together as the African Association to

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1. General Act of the West African Conference 26.2.85, Caps.V & VI.
2. Ja Ja's rise to power is described in Dike, 'Trade and Politics in the Niger Delta 1830-1885' Oxford 1956 cap.X pp. 182-202.
3. Oliver, Sir Harry Johnston and the Scramble for Africa 1957 p.107.
4. Oliver op.cit. pp.107-123: Anene op.cit. pp.61-97: Geary, W.N.M., 'Nigeria under British Rule' 1927 App.I.

form a buying ring to force down prices paid to the African middlemen. Ja Ja had reacted by stopping their trade and shipping his produce direct to England. One of the European firms, Miller Brothers and Co., broke with the rest and traded on Ja Ja's terms at a handsome profit.

To Johnston, who became acting Consul on Hewett's annual return to England in 1886, the situation was intolerable. When he visited Opobo five sixths of the European boats were lying idle, and trade seemed at a standstill.[1] Johnston was quite prepared to listen to the complaints of the Liverpool merchants, since they accorded so well with his own prejudices that the middlemen were "the curse of Western Africa ..... /they are/ resolved to prevent any inter-communication between the white traders on the coast and the industrious thrifty tribes of the interior."[2] After stopping Ja Ja's trade,[3] Johnston was convinced that the only solution was to deport him;[4] accordingly without waiting for final authority from the Foreign Office,[5] he invited him on board H.M.S. Goshawk to palaver and then sailed off with the unhappy king to the Gold Coast (September

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1. F.O. 84/1828 Johnston to Salisbury 1.8.87.
2. F.O.C.P. 5312 Johnston to Salisbury 20.2.86.
3. F.O. 84/1828 Johnston to Salisbury 20.8,87.
4. Johnston had come to this conclusion as early as January 1886. F.O.84/1750 to Salisbury 15.1.86.
5. All the correspondence is in F.O.C.P. 5588.

19th 1887). There the king was detained by an ordinance[1] which was rushed with indecent haste through the Gold Coast Legislative Council, and subjected to a hurried trial before being exiled to the West Indies.[2] Although he was allowed to return from exile three years later after Macdonald had settled in the Rivers, he died before reaching Opobo.

Throughout the whole episode the Foreign Office officials had supported Johnston with little sense of equity. Lister thought Ja Ja a 'false and cruel chief' whose 'cup of iniquity is now full' and whose deportation was just reward for his ingratitude. Anderson and Hewett (still in London) agreed.[3] In one sense they can hardly be blamed for taking this attitude - the issue from a distance seemed simple. Here was a chief who was obstructing the development of British trade and who, therefore, had to be removed, treaty or no treaty. On the other hand there was little logic in their approach. As we have seen, when it suited long term objectives, the officials often totally disregarded the advice of the men on the spot. Johnston was fortunate in that what he did was in consonance with a general policy of trade development - the days of the middlemen monopolists, European as well as African, were nearly

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1. Opobo Political Prisoners Detention Ordinance 6.10.87.
2. F.O.C.P. 5686. Johnston to Salisbury 2.12.87.
3. F.O.Conf. Print 5588 Hewett to Salisbury 20.8.87. min. by Lister 22.8.87.

over. This was the lesson that the African Association was to learn in a rather less painful fashion than Ja Ja over the next decade. Johnston's part was merely to force the hand of the government as to method and timing, but not intention, in their dealings with any coast chief who had the temerity to imagine he was independent.

One man who throughout had remained unimpressed by the arguments was Lord Salisbury himself. The news of Ja Ja's arrest could hardly have come at a worse moment. Ja Ja, hard pressed by Johnston, had, in the previous August, sent a deputation to England which had been introduced at the Foreign Office by a director of Miller Brother & Co. Fergusson, the Parliamentary Under Secretary, had promised them a full investigation at Opobo by a Senior Naval Officer.[1] The arrest meant certain parliamentary agitation and awkward questions. As far as Salisbury was concerned the whole affair was "a mess."[2] Moreover he felt a personal repugnance to the whole manner of Ja Ja's deportation, referring to it privately as "kidnapping."[3] No one was more aware than Salisbury, however, that once the event had taken place, more harm would be done to the government by dropping than by supporting Johnston.[4] On Johnston's

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1. F.O. 84/1828 memo. by Fergusson 13.9.87. This paper had conveniently disappeared when the papers were laid before parliament.
2. F.O. Conf. Print 5588 min. by Salisbury 23.9.87.
3. F.O.C.P. 5588 memo. by Salisbury 29.8.87.
4. F.O. 84/1828 Johnston to Salisbury 4.10.87 min. by S.

official report he wrote a frosty minute; "Simply approve his conduct. We need not discuss the principles developed in this dispatch. They amount to this, that when a merchant differs from a native chief as to their respective rights, the native chief is to be deported."[1]

The consequences of the Ja Ja affair were manifold. It was now evident how far the traditional bases on which trading relations in the delta had rested lay shattered. Hitherto African rulers had been able to guarantee a reasonable measure of internal stability amongst the coastal states which had enabled trade to flow freely from clearly demarcated markets in the interior. On the European side there was acquiescence in the thesis that not only could the African chief keep the peace and protect trade for which he was paid a "comey,"[2] but that also penetration into the interior was impossible anyway, or at least not worth the economic effort in both money and lives. The arrest of Ja Ja drew attention in the most dramatic fashion to the fact that the indigenous middlemen were no longer a vital part of the trading system. The Niger Company had shown the way to the interior, and where they went others could follow. The incentive was provided by the middlemen disputes, the developments in hygiene and tropi-

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1. F.O. 84/1828 Johnston to Salisbury 24.9.87 min. by S.
2. Jones op.cit. pp.94-6.

cal medicine[1] which enabled the European to spend longer on the coast, and the world depression in oil prices during the middle eighties. During the crisis Ja Ja himself shipped oil direct to England, just as the European traders were attempting to deal direct with his markets - clear evidence not only of the changing trade pattern but also of the ability of African rulers themselves to adapt to the future given the opportunity.

On the political level it was all very well to support an action taken on the broad grounds that Ja Ja's vested interests, not to say treaty rights, were irreconciliable with international commitments, and that he had forfeited his privileges by abusing them. The fact was that those privileges had been exercised from time out of mind and any attack on them contributed ipso facto to the prevailing political instability. Again, to tell European traders they had a right to push into the interior was one thing, to protect them was quite another. The British government could hardly expect the cowed African princes to resume their old function as if nothing had happened. The whole question of Oil Rivers government came to the fore in a manner which was decisive. Even before the first furore had died down, Pauncefote had come to the conclusion (December 1887) that "the first step to be decided is as to our political status in these territories....the whole position must be investigated."[2]

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1. The most revolutionary in its implications being the regular daily dose of quinine in conjunction with the mosquito net.
2. F.O. 84/1839 Johnston to F.O. 21.10.87. Min. by J.P. 12-87.

An investigation was indeed long overdue, for the officers on the spot had further complicated matters by their endeavours to settle the form of government for themselves. In view of the vagueness of the wording in the protectorate treaties, and the consistently unhelpful instructions from the Foreign Office it was a natural proceeding. In 1886 Hewett had intervened in Bonny to put a stop to threatened civil war between Oko Jumbo and Warribo Manilla Pepple, two over-mighty chiefs against whom the king, George Pepple, was powerless.[1] He appointed five neutral chiefs to form a legislative and executive council for the country, reserving to himself the right to veto any law which the new local authority might enact. The only reaction from the Foreign Office was a comment by Anderson that "Hewett is trying to settle many large questions under his system of benevolent despotism."[2] Similarly Johnston with or without authority, was determined to establish law and order in place of the systems which had been or were being overthrown. To do this he believed that it was not only necessary to extend the treaties of protection to the inland markets, but also to establish a system of local authorities on a clearly recognisable (that is, European) pattern which would underpin

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1. For an account of this dispute see Anene p.76-7.
2. F.O.84/1749 Hewett to F.O. 12.7.86. Min. by H.P.A. 4.9.86.

the authority of the consul. Johnston's justification was that "the native chiefs do not seem competent to administer the affairs of their country in a wise and just manner."[1]

Whether or not Johnston was right in his assumption, his system of Governing Councils certainly shifted the balance of native jurisdiction from African to European. At Opobo there were only three Africans out of a total body of ten on the council and these were nominated by the consul; Brass did rather better with six out of fifteen, although one of the six, Archdeacon Crowther, was not a chief at all, and had so many other commitments that his full time participation was doubtful. The new Governing Council met weekly, and its powers were limited "to the carrying out of Consular orders, the preservation of peace, the maintenance of highways and means of communication, and the hearing in court of minor civil actions and criminal charges." The maximum punishment which the Council could inflict was £5, 1 week's imprisonment, or 12 lashes, although in individual cases this could be increased with the sanction of the consul.[2] Appeals from the decision of the Governing Council were permitted to the Consular Court at Old Calabar but were discouraged. Verdicts of the Council were by a majority of votes and a quorum was fixed at three. This not only meant that the African members

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1. F.O.84/1828 Johnston to F.O. 24.9.87.
2. F.O.84/1828 Johnston to F.O. 24.9.87.

could be consistently outvoted but that the council could flourish in their absence. Comey - the tax which African chiefs regarded as their legitimate revenue - was placed under the Council's control. Half was to be expended by the Council "in the interests of the country" and the rest was to go to the indigenous rulers. Lastly the Council was to execute an order banning the importation and sale "of machine guns, cannon, breech loading guns, bullet cartridges, etc."[1] The native government, entirely under alien control, bore little resemblance to the old Courts of Equity. Johnston was pointing the way forwards towards Colonial administration, not backwards to the pre-1885 period.

All this was going too fast for the Foreign Office, which demanded to know by what right a mere acting consul had taken upon himself to decide matters of high policy and "establish a totally different regime politically and legally to that which is now in force."[2] Johnston's answer was an elaborate self justification in which he tried to maintain that the Governing Council was a reconstitution of the Court of Equity, with the difference that all interests were represented instead of just those of the white traders in the old court.[3] Johnston

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1. F.O.84/1839 Johnston to F.O. 21.10.87.
2. F.O.C.P. 5686 F.O. to Johnston 10.2.88.
3. F.O.C.P. 5686 Johnston to Salisbury 18.4.88.

must have known that the statement concerning representation in the courts was untrue. Certainly the records of the Old Calabar court which he had to hand would have told him otherwise. Justification was not, however, Johnston's main concern; a permanent administration in the Oil Rivers with, perhaps, himself as governor, was far more to his taste. Johnston was nothing if not an opportunist, and the power vacuum created by Ja Ja's removal had given him the chance to place the dilemma of governing the Rivers squarely before officialdom.

Keenly aware like Johnston of the dilemma in which they were placed, officials could neither bring themselves to approve nor disapprove of Johnston's measures. Hewett was allowed to return to the Oil Rivers on 8th May 1888 without definite instructions as to whether he should encourage or discourage the Councils from functioning, although he was asked to report on the situation.[1] In the event, Hewett's pique at Johnston's achievements in the short time in which he had been in charge merely worsened the political confusion in the Rivers. In December Anderson received a plaintive letter from the African Association stating that Hewett had informed the Governing Councils that they "will be held responsible for any use made of their governing powers, which powers are now suspended" and asking what the legal responsibility of their agents was and the pre-

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1. F.O.C.P. 5686. F.O. to Hewett May 88.

cise validity of Johnston's orders.[1] The necessity for an impartial investigation so that a fresh start could be made, began to assume an overwhelming importance.

Of themselves events in the Oil Rivers might not have forced such an investigation on the Foreign Office. The emphasis must now, therefore, shift to the European scene and the second direction from which opposition emanated to the easy assumptions of the Foreign Office - Liverpool.

The attitude of Liverpool to the Charter held by the Niger Company and the plan for its extension to the Oil Rivers was often confused and hesitating and was never consistent. There were several reasons for this. In the first place Liverpool was a collection of elements whose interests rarely coalesced. Two groups are of especial concern to us - the shipowners and the merchants trading on the west coast. The shipowners, dominated by the Elder Dempster combine, were concerned that any amalgamation of the merchants in the Oil Rivers with the Niger Company should not give exclusive bargaining power to an enlarged organisation to reduce freight rates to and from the West Coast. More particularly the shipowners feared that a monopoly cartel might start its own independent shipping line effectively excluding the older companies from the lucrative African trade. The traders could rarely bring themselves to work with the steamship companies when they were at the same time bickering about freight rates.

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1. F.O. 84/1935 African Association to F.O. 24.12.88.

In the second place the opposition of the traders themselves to Charter extension was equivocal. They suffered from the handicap of rarely being able to speak with a united voice, despite the grandiose claims of the African Association to dominate the Liverpool Chamber of Commerce when it came to discussing matters African. There were a number of firms both great and small who traded outside the combine, the most important being Miller, Brother & Co., which had connections in Glasgow as well as Liverpool, and which had feet in both the Niger Company and the Delta trade. On the one hand, therefore, the merchants bitterly resented the commercial activities of the newly chartered company. This was a predictable response. Goldie's exclusion of the African brokers of the Oil Rivers from the hinterland markets struck at the heart of the Liverpool oil trade, whose operations were still largely confined to the coast, and whose prosperity therefore depended on the prosperity of the coastal middlemen. In broad economic terms, Liverpool was having to pay more for its oil on the coast, when selling prices in Europe throughout the eighties were steadily dropping. On the other hand, recognising with grudging admiration the source of the Company's success, Liverpool nurtured ambitions of its own either to join Goldie as an ally in a new enlarged sphere of operations under an extended Charter which would include the Rivers, or to obtain a separate charter for its own

African Association. It could not therefore oppose the principle of Chartered Company Administration. All the traders complaints took on "the appearance of petty grievances and quibbles."[1]

This lack of purposeful argument was reflected in action. At the same time as the African Association was opening its campaign against the Company,[2] it began to make overtures in secret to Goldie, encouraged, of course, by the Foreign Office. Goldie himself was anxious for his sphere of operations to be extended to include the Rivers, since it would immeasurably strengthen his hand in dealing with the opposition to chartered company administration, and a richer company would be able to conduct the government on a less ad hoc basis. The negotiations bristled with difficulties. Not only did they have to be kept secret, particularly from the shipowners, but the African Association in order to keep itself financially off the rocks had also to keep up pressure against the Company in the Rivers.

The amount of pressure they did exert, therefore, varied according to the state of their trade in the Rivers, and the state of their negotiations with Goldie. During the first half of 1887 attacks on the Company reached a crescendo. This was the period of greatest difficulty for the Association.

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1. Flint op.cit. p.99.
2. F.O.84/1880 African Association to Iddesleigh 29.11.86.

The price of palm oil reached a new low in Europe in April, the commercial regulations of the Company were beginning to bite, and the Association found itself in the paradoxical position of supporting the middlemen of New Calabar and Brass against the Company at the same time as it was hammering away at Ja Ja. In March it mobilised the Liverpool Members of Parliament, ever sensitive to the trading interests of the great city, and presented a monster petition to parliament complaining against the Company's tariffs and proposing that the Company's sphere of operations should be restricted to the region north of Onitsha,[1] a proposal which would have effectively bankrupted the Chartered administration, since ninety per cent of the oil belt lay to the south.

During the latter half of 1887 complaints against the Company by the Association ceased. Palm oil prices picked up during the summer,[2] and Johnston's breaking of Ja Ja, in which affair the African Association had the support of the Foreign Office, somewhat eased their situation. More particularly the traders at last began to grasp the facts of life. Learning from their success against Ja Ja, they ceased indulging in cut

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1. F.O.84/1880 African Association to Lawrence M.P., Dillwyn M.P. to Fergusson 21.3.87; Williamson M.P. to F.O. 20.4.87.

2. The Times passim for 1887 enables oil prices to be followed.

throat competition against each other and co-operated to control prices; again, having traded inland during Ja Ja's prohibition of commerce in the Opobo, there was no reason why they could not continue to do so when the obstacle to their ambitions had been removed. Finally and most important of all, if the combination of Goldie and the Foreign Office could not be beaten down, the incentive was all the greater to join it. To the delight of the Foreign Office, negotiations between Goldie and the Association began in earnest, and by February 1888 it looked as though agreement was in sight. If this were so, then "the whole coast will go under the Niger Company."[1] Two months later, Rogerson, the Chairman of the African Association, informed a delighted Fergusson that he was "pretty confident of making a fair arrangement with the Niger Company ..... if it is understood that the Charter is to be extended to the Oil Rivers."[2]

It was too good to be true. The success of the negotiations depended upon absolute secrecy. Unfortunately for both Goldie and the Association, the shipping companies possessed a particularly good intelligence service. Not only were they aware that talks were taking place between the two commercial concerns,

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1. F.O. 84/1828 Johnston to Salisbury 13.1.88 min. by H.P.A. 15.1.88.

2. Sals. Papers (Fergusson) Fergusson to Salisbury 18.4.88.

they also knew that in February agreement was near.[1] This sparked off a fierce campaign of opposition. A deputation waited on Fergusson at the Foreign Office, expressing aversion to Company rule in the Rivers, and insisting that they should have an opportunity to represent their case before any final decision as to administration was made.[2]

The threat posed by the shippers was no light one. Elder Dempster had links with Peninsular and Orient and the Pacific Steam Navigation Company, the two largest merchant shipping companies in the world. There was no more powerful commercial lobby in parliament than the shipowners, who had friends on all sides of the House. Fergusson, alarmed by the strength of the deputation, stalled for time by asking them to submit their case in writing.[3] The resulting document was a formidable and savage indictment of Company rule based on first principles. A government could have no control over a chartered company which traded for its own benefit, because it could never prevent the manipulation of administrative regulations in favour of the company and against its rivals. A company with administrative powers was a natural monopoly, since it only had to transfer customs duties from one account to another, whereas its rivals had to pay in cash. If the Niger

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1. The man who served the shippers so well was Alfred Jones, managing director of the West African steamship lines. See Milne A.H., Sir Alfred Lewis Jones Liverpool 1914.
2. F.O. 84/1916 Memo by Fergusson 23.2.88.
3. Ibid.

and the Oil Rivers were amalgamated under the Company, they would establish a shipping line against which no one could compete.[1] The Foreign Office, however, refused to be drawn into an academic discussion from which they could gain nothing. Instead Bond, the Chairman of the African Steamship Company, was asked for a "specific statement of the dangers to be provided against in the administration of the Oil Rivers."[2] Foreign Office incomprehension of the nature of the shippers' fears was revealed by the simultaneous facile assurance to Bond that "regarding his preference for a colonial rather than a company administration in the Niger district there are the fullest guarantees against high duties or differential treatment. The Company is bound by stricter rules than exist in any British Colony, the violation of which might involve forfeiture of their Charter."[3]

Clearly worried, however, by the opposition, the Foreign Office attempted to take some heat out of the discussion by transmitting the complaints of the shippers in private to Goldie.[4] If they hoped that Goldie, seeing the strength of the opposition, would endeavour to conciliate it, they mistook their

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1. F.O.C.P. 5686 African Steamship Company and British and Africa Steam Navigation Company to Salisbury 27.2.88.
2. F.O.C.P. 5686 F.O. to Bond 15.3.88.
3. F.O.C.P. 5686 F.O. to Bond 15.3.88.
4. F.O. 84/1918 Lister to Goldie 29.3.88.

man. Goldie replied with a violent attack on the shipping companies in which he alleged that the real motives behind their dislike of Company rule was the fear that "extension of the Charter would lead to a great diminution of the spirit traffic on which....the ocean freights depend."[1] At the same time he terminated all the Company's freight contracts with the West African lines as from the 1st August 1888, and threatened to establish in concert with the Rivers' interest, a rival shipping line.[2]

In the long run Goldie might have done better for himself if he had endeavoured to conciliate the shipping interests. As it was his attitude could not fail to bring the whole question of charter extension before the public eye and prejudice its chances of success. The Foreign Office was horrified. Even the sanguine Anderson was constrained to comment that Goldie "does not help us much."[3] For the first time the Foreign Office was forced to consider the establishment of direct control over the workings of a chartered company. The opposition the shippers could arouse both in the country and in parliament could not be brushed off without some solid assurances that if amalgamation took place monopoly would not follow. A formidable

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1. F.O. 84/1918 Goldie to Lister 4.4.88.
2. F.O. 84/1919 Br. & Africa Steamship Co. and African Steam Navigation Co. to F.O. 17.4.88.
3. F.O. 84/1918 Min. by H.P.A. 5.4.88 on Goldie to Lister 4.4.88.

deputation of owners, representing a total tonnage of 1,097,000, waited on the Prime Minister and extracted an undertaking that the scheme for amalgamation would be fully investigated before it was passed and no monopoly would be tolerated.[1] When Salisbury, however, inquired of his officials "the rules and conditions by which in case of the whole Protectorate being placed under the Royal Niger Company, the Company might be restrained from acting unfairly in their own interest towards rival traders or shipping companies,"[2] Anderson was forced to admit that however complete "the protection on paper.....a great Company which appoints its own executives and judicial staff will work indirectly for its own interests and crowd out rivals and it cannot be denied that the complaint may be justifiable."[3] The only way out would be to appoint the Agent General and the Chief Justice as Crown Commissions, which, since it meant the acceptance of Government responsibility, knocked the whole raison d'etre out of Chartered Company administration. Anderson doubted whether Goldie would accept any real control over the Company's agents by the Crown. Pauncefote went still further in advocating Crown appointment of a High Commissioner and a Director General of Customs, and in suggesting that the whole of the judicial administration should

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1. F.O. 84/1918 Liverpool Steamship Owners Association to Salisbury 9.4.88.
2. F.O. 84/1918 Memo. by S. 9.4.88.
3. F.O. 84/1918 Min. by H.P.A. 11.4.88.

be taken from the Company's control if the Charter were extended.[1] The Permanent Secretary seemed entirely oblivious of the ill-conceived anomaly of his argument, which, if forced on the Company, would have broken their administration in two, at the same time as the widening of its scope to produce greater efficiency was under consideration. If the government's original policy had been no responsibility and no control, pressure of circumstances was forcing them in the opposite direction.

The nature of the Liverpool opposition, and the fact that the African Association failed to draw all trade interests into its orbit induced a much more cautious approach on the part of the Foreign Office towards the plan for charter extension to the Delta. Rival interests would have to be satisfied before amalgamation as a basis for administration was accepted. This meant of necessity more control by government over the Company, the nature of which would have to be investigated by a special commissioner on the spot. From September 1888 action on the charter hung fire, although the proposal continued to be discussed in the Foreign Office. Salisbury was adamant; nothing should be done pending an investigation of the political situation on the Niger.

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1. F.O. 84/1918 Min. by J.P. 11.4.88.

2. F.O. 84/1928 Mins. by S. and T.V.L. 17.9.88.

If the supporters of the Charter had only had domestic critics to overcome, they might yet have won over a Foreign Office still opposed to spending money on imperial adventures. Caution was, however, being forced on the officials from a third direction - the German Government, whose influence was to prove decisive in the long run.

German hostility to the Company was not without some justification. Goldie had spent a fair proportion of his time since 1886 in devising ways and means of evading both the Berlin Act and the Anglo-German Agreement. As custodian of the former and partner in the latter, the German Government was bound to insist that their provisions be upheld. Goldie's interpretation of the Berlin Act differed radically from that advanced by the Germans. The clauses dealing with the Niger referred only to its navigation, which was free to all nations. There was no mention of trade. Therefore, Goldie argued, a ship could move freely on the water, but let it once touch the bank, it became a trader and subject to the Company's jurisdiction.[1] As Goldie well knew, it was impossible to navigate the length of the Company's territories without stopping to obtain food and water. Practically there was no such thing as transit trade on the Niger. Since Goldie's argument was in

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1. F.O. 84/1742 Goldie to Anderson 18.9.86.

accord with the literal interpretation of the wording of the Act, the German Government was forced to attack on a broader front. The claims of the Company turned free transit into a farce. Moreover jurisdiction on the banks of the Niger, to be recognised, should be backed by effective occupation; where this was not the case, trade was free to pass unhampered. Obstruction by the Company amounted to a monopoly which was exercised in flagrant violation of the Berlin Act.[1]

The German Government also based their last point on the 1886 agreement. There were several relevant clauses here which they accused Goldie of violating; the equal treatment of foreigners and foreign goods, the stipulation that taxes should be levied "solely for the purpose of meeting the expenses necessary...to carry out the obligations imposed....by the protectorates" and that duties should be "as moderate as possible."[2] Goldie exploited the difficulty of separating the Company's administrative costs from commercial costs to evade any Foreign Office demand for a proper balance sheet. There was no way of checking his claims for administrative expenditure, or of proving the German charge that taxation was too high.

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1. F.O. 84/1894 Hatzfeldt to Salisbury 10.3.88.
2. F.O.C.P. 5161 Granville to Munster 16.5.85.

The diplomatic wrangling was given point by the entry into the Niger of a German trader, Hoenigsberg, in June 1887. Whether Hoenigsberg was an agent provocateur or not,[1] his actions were certainly questionable. After obtaining clearance for a cargo of salt at Akassa, the German proceeded to invite arrest by transferring his cargo into separate bottoms. When stopped by the Company's officials and ordered to obtain fresh clearance, Hoenigsberg abandoned his voyage, complaining that it would be useless to obtain more papers, and avowed his intention of "bursting up" the Company's charter.[2]

This he proceeded to do by travelling to Nupe in November 1887 and provoking a quarrel between the Emir and the Company. Hoenigsberg told the Emir that the Company claimed both a monopoly of trade in his territory and absolute rights of sovereignty. The Emir was thoroughly annoyed at these 'pretentions' and not only gave Hoenigsberg a signed statement to the effect that the Company's claims were untrue but forced the agent general to buy off his wrath by raising the annual subsidy that Nupe received by virtue of the treaty with the Company from £400 to £2000.[3]

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1. The point is discussed in Flint Goldie p.114 ff.
2. Macdonald Report Cap IV.
3. Ibid.

The myth of the effectiveness of the Company's rule seemingly exploded, the German Government claimed that since the Emir was apparently independent, all trade to Nupe was transit trade, the Company had therefore no right to levy duties or obstruct traders going there and should refund all money paid by German subjects.[1] Goldie's answer was to claim sovereignty over Nupe by virtue of a treaty signed with Gwandu, Nupe's overlord, in 1886 which had ceded to the Company the land on both banks of the Niger and Benue above Lokoja,[2] and to have the German arrested on the charge of "promoting and attempting to promote strife and disorder". Hoenigsberg was duly tried at Asaba, found guilty, and sentenced to deportation. If he returned, he faced three months' imprisonment.[3]

This precipitate action of Goldie not only predictably annoyed the Germans; it unquestionably annoyed the Foreign Office. Despite Goldie's protests, the Foreign Office agreed to a German request that Hoenigsberg should be allowed to return to the Niger on condition that he abstained from intrigues

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1. F.O. 84/1894 Hatzfeldt to Salisbury 27.1.88.

2. F.O. 84/1916 Goldie to Currie 21.2.88. The Emir of Gwandu was the junior of the two heads (the other being the Sultan of Sokoto) of the Fulani Empire set up as a result of the Fulani jihad in the early nineteenth century. The Empire was split into semi-independent emirates of which Nupe was one. The best study of the Empire is H.A.S. Johnston The Fulani Empire of Sokoto (1967).

3. F.O. 84/1894 Memo. by Hatzfeldt 5.3.88.

in Nupe. The doctrine that government could delegate its powers to a chartered company and escape responsibility for its acts was beginning to wear a little thin. Goldie's reaction was logical enough; "as Her Majesty's Government have taken the responsibility of his /Hoenigsberg's/ return, which cannot be regarded by the Emir Moleki otherwise than as a defeat of the Niger Administration, they will not refuse the assistance of Great Britain in the event of any serious incidents occurring."[1]

As far as the German Government was concerned the deportation of Hoenigsberg had been the last straw. They proceeded to attack on the broad principle that the source of the trouble was an administration run by a trading concern. There ought, argued Berlin, to be some kind of government control over the company - the British government should undertake to appoint customs officials "who would be responsible for the strict observance of international engagements."[2]

Confused opposition from Liverpool was one thing; the full diplomatic weight of Germany quite another. The Foreign Office for the first time became painfully aware of the fact that no official representative of the Crown had been up the

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1. F.O. 84/1934 F.O. to R.N.C. 1.12.88 reply 8.12.88; 1935 to R.N.C. 20.12.88 reply 22.12.88.

2. F.O.84/1892 Malet to Salisbury 7.3.88; 1894 Hatzfeldt to Salisbury 10.3.88, Leyden to Barrington 19.5.88.

Niger since 1885, and that they had no information of conditions in the Company's domain other than that which Goldie chose to supply. As Salisbury remarked concerning the German allegations, "Any denial from us as we have not got any representative of our own in the country would be, so to speak, mere hearsay evidence and would carry little weight."[1]

In the event the Government was spared the necessity of a denial, for Germany determined to force the issue. If the Company would not protect German traders, then Berlin would. In July Bismarck announced that a Consul was to be appointed as the official representative of Germany on the spot. This, it was explained, would ease friction, as he would have the power to settle disputes as they arose. It was expected, of course, that Her Majesty's Government would also appoint an official with whom the German representative could deal, and who would, at the same time, investigate the reasonable complaints of the Imperial Government against the Niger Company and ensure respect for the Berlin Act. The mention of the Berlin Act was an implicit threat that, if Britain did not co-operate, Germany might reconvene the Berlin Conference.[2]

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1. F.O. 84/1894 Min. by S. on Hatzfeldt to Salisbury 10.3.88.

2. F.O. 84/1892 Malet to Salisbury 14.7.88.

To Salisbury, however, the request was something of a relief. For months the need for an investigation into the situation on the Niger had been manifest. Company was at odds with merchants, consul differed from consul, African rulers bickered with each other and with the European factors, ship owners quarrelled with traders, and now government disputed with government. The result in the word of Anderson was "chaos".[1] With an inquiry, not only could government answer critics from a basis of strength, but at the same time the portion of the Protectorate not under the Company could, on the basis of impartial evidence, be settled under an administration satisfactory to all. The German request was accepted at once. Although the Niger was too low for an investigation to be conducted in 1888, a Special Commissioner would be sent out at the earliest possible moment during the following year. All complaints would be passed over to him for investigation, likewise all suggestions for future government.[2]

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1. F.O.84/1881 Min. by H.P.A. on Hewett to Salisbury 20.6.88.
2. F.O.84/1890 Salisbury to Scott 28.8.88.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE REPORTS.

The immediate problem after Salisbury had agreed to an investigation, was to find someone to conduct it. None of the men on the spot was considered suitable. Hewett was ageing, his health was breaking down, and his personality was not such as to command confidence from the Germans;[1] moreover he was too involved in the disputes of the Oil Rivers himself to be impartial. The same could be said of Johnston, whose continual denigration of German rule in the Cameroons and opposition to the cession of Victoria caused the German administration no small amount of trouble.[2] Anderson was equally adamant that he could spare no one from the Africa Department. The enquiry would be "long and arduous", undertaken in "an adverse climate", and besides there was "too much on the books elsewhere".[3]

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1. One of the German complaints against Hewett was that he left correspondence unanswered because he could not speak German.

2. E.g. F.O. 84/1882 Johnston to Salisbury 12.12.88. For the German side, Verisaltungssachen 33c No. 1, Acten betreffend die Differenzen mit dem englishchen Vice Konsul Johnston in Victoria. 1 Vol. The German attitude was obviously instrumental in deciding the appointment to the post of Commissioner and Consul General in 1890, which Johnston felt he had strong claims to. His failure to get it he rather absurdly ascribed to the Miller faction. See Johnston, Story of my Life 1923.

3. F.O. 366/749 Anderson to Pauncefote. n.d.

The return of Macdonald from Zanzibar could not therefore have been better timed as far as Anderson was concerned. Here was a man of proven energy, who had held a key consular post not without some distinction. His health was good, his German was better, his tact and discretion had made him acceptable to Berlin, his involvement in West African disputes was nil, and his experience of Islamic peoples during eight years' service in East and North Africa would provide him with a basis for understanding the peculiarly sensitive situation in Nupe. Anderson was not long in turning thought into action, and when Macdonald arrived in London he was told to take his leave and report back to the Foreign Office by the beginning of October.[1] By then preliminaries had been agreed with the War Office and Macdonald was informed of his impending appointment and given the relevant material sfor study.

On December 15 1888, Macdonald received his royal commission. His instructions followed on January 17th, 1889. Herein the dual character of his mission lay revealed. He was to investigate the Royal Niger Company's administration and report whether there were "any grounds for the complaints against the mode in which the Company has exercised its powers, and

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1. F.O. 366/749. Memon by H.P.A minutes by F.B.A. & J.P., n.d.

whether any modifications of those powers, or any appeal to the decisions of Her Majesty's Consuls is necessary in order to guard against abuses if you detect any." In the second place he was to "Report upon the expediency of the proposal that the Oil Rivers should be included in the Charter of the Company." If the answer was yes, he was to indicate "whether any conditions should be imposed in order to give more ample security for the rights of traders, of whatever nationality, who are not connected with the Company." If he thought the opposite, he was to indicate whether he thought the Oil Rivers should be annexed to Lagos, be endowed with a separate colonial administration, or remain under the existing Consular system. In connection with his second task, he was to visit Benin River and get information as to the extent to which the "various Proclamations and Treaties are consistent or inconsistent with one another, as to the manner in which they are interpreted by the native population; as to the validity of the title on which they rest, and as to the expediency of leaving them, with or without modification, to their present operation."[1]

It is important to note that nowhere in the instructions is any indication given as to how Macdonald should conduct his investigations or as to what he should

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1. F.O. 84/1940. F.O. to Macdonald, 17.1.89.

give first place. It was simply assumed that, bearing in mind that imperial interests demanded that the Niger Company should not be shown in too unfavourable a light, he should investigate the alleged abuses, and if, as was hoped, he found the complaints largely unfounded, plans for the extension of the charter might go ahead, presuming he considered it feasible. This was certainly the view of Anderson when he commented on the first draft of the instructions: "I would observe that /his/ instructions have been addressed to points of detail rather than questions of policy as to the re-organisation of the executive and judicial system under closer government control, as it seemed that the latter were already fully understood by us as far as any local material could assist us, and would have to be dealt with after the reception of the Commissioner's report if it is decided to grant a new and amended Charter."[1] In other words, the lynch-pin of the whole investigation was to be the Niger Company, around which the rest of the Niger Territories would revolve.

These assumptions never seemed to occur to Macdonald. In the first place, he reversed the emphasis of his instructions not only by visiting the Oil Rivers

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1. F.O. 84/1940. Minute by H.P.A. 7.1.89.

first, but also, in his preliminary report, before he had ascended the Niger, by coming out so strongly against the Company's rule in the Rivers. In so doing he prejudiced the whole basis of this investigations on the Niger, which assumed the character of a highly instructive picture of the workings of a chartered administration, but in no sense formed a foundation on which that administration could be extended. Indeed Macdonald's recommendations in the Niger report were all in the direction of diminishing the Company's powers, particularly in its trading policy, rather than of extending them.

Secondly, Macdonald's interpretation of imperial interests in the Oil Rivers was highly novel. He simply assumed that these were adequately represented by the wishes of the African, and he proceeded to find out, in the most thorough fashion open to him, precisely what these wishes as to future government were, and then put them forward as his own recommendations. More surprising is the fact that the Foreign Office did not seem to take exception to this mode of procedure. Naturally, in the event, when the plans for the charter extension fell through, it was highly convenient to be able to appeal to native interests over the heads of Goldie and the traders, This still does not explain

the original negative response of the Foreign Office. After all, it was less than eighteen months later that Salisbury himself was to resist a similar request from the Queen that the inhabitants of Heligoland should be consulted before their transfer to Germany, on the grounds that "Anything like a plebiscite would be very dangerous, as admitting the right of inhabitants of an imperial post to decide for themselves as to the political depositions of that post."[1] If in this context Macdonald's mode of procedure was convenient, it was a dangerous precedent elsewhere.

Macdonald left Liverpool on February 6th, arriving at Bonny on March 1st. He visited the Opobo, New Calabar, Sombrero, Old Calabar, Brass, Forcados and Benin rivers, in that order. By May 3rd. he was back in Lagos, having finished his Oil Rivers investigation. Since he could not visit the Niger until it rose in July, he asked for and obtained permission to return home, arriving in London on June 3rd. He had been away barely four months.

His method of conducting the inquiry is best told in his own words:

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1. Salisbury Private Papers A/46. Salisbury to the Queen, 10.6.90.

> "In all of these rivers I stayed several days - in the Bonny River upwards of three weeks and endeavoured to make myself thoroughly acquainted with the wishes, feelings and ideas of all classes of the community with regard to the special question on which I had been sent out. To this end I had separate palavers with the Kings and native Chiefs. I explained to them the nature of my mission, and pointed out clearly to them that what I required to know was their own ideas and wishes with regard to the form of government most suited to their country in the future. These ideas and wishes I would hold as confidential should they so desire it. I also pointed out that Her Majesty's Government would naturally not bind themselves in any way to accept the views and ideas they set forth, but would be guided to a great extent by the wishes of the community generally. I had numerous opportunities of speaking to the agents of the various firms, both German and English, trading in the rivers. My interviews were private and by this means I was able to arrive at their real views on the subject, which were in the majority, and most reliable of cases quite unbiassed by orders received from home. With the missionaries, both English and native, in various rivers, I also had private interviews." [1]

Thus, by talking to as many people as possible, Macdonald built up a mass of material on which to base his report. In all his discussions with the kings and chiefs he brought forward prominently the question of Company or Colony - and their replies and preferences he meticulously preserved.

An analysis of the replies which Macdonald received is interesting. The Chiefs of Bonny expressed a desire to become a British Colony, with reservations

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1. F.O. 84/1940. Macdonald to Salisbury, 12.6.89. All quotations in the following section are taken from this dispatch unless otherwise indicated.

concerning the possession of their land and slaves. If these were taken away without compensation, they would be ruined. The suggestion of money indicated to Macdonald that these problems were not insuperable.

Whilst at Bonny Macdonald resided with Captain Boler, the agent of Messrs. Harrison and Co. in the Rivers for over thirty years. This "most trusted agent" of Rogerson, the Chairman of the African Association, told the Commissioner confidentially that though he had received private instructions to further in every possible manner the extension of the Niger Company's Charter, or of a chartered company of Oil River merchants, he was quite convinced that the Bonny Chiefs would never submit to being governed in any way by a trading association; their knowledge of the Niger Company was only hearsay, but their knowledge of their fellow traders was derived from daily and personal contact with them.

Also at Bonny's, where Macdonald stayed upwards of three weeks, was the headquarters of the Church Missionary Society, and here he had frequent opportunities of conversation with Archdeacon Crowther and the other native missionaries stationed there. These he took to represent "the wishes and sentiments of the bulk of the poorer classes of slaves and freemen."

It would perhaps be truer to say that they represented the Christian and detribalised elements of the largely inarticulate "lower classes". The Archdeacon left him in no doubt about his opinions as to what could be made of the Oil Rivers. In the case of annexation and colonial government, "trade will increase, the Christian religion will be embraced and extended into the interior places, barbarous acts will be stopped, lives of men, women and children will be saved, and the people on the whole will be bettered in every way."

Macdonald next visited the Opobo river where, owing to the blockade of the river by Her Majesty's gunboats, he had some difficulty in bringing together all the Opobo chiefs. At length, he managed an interview with some four or five, with Cookie Gam to act as spokesman. Not surprisingly, the answer of a community that was virtually leaderless since the removal of the strong personality of Ja Ja, and was at present under punishment by the strong arm of the most powerful navy in the world, was suitably chastened. They would wish to become a British colony if the choice lay with them alone, but they could not of themselves choose to be separated from their mother country Bonny and the other Oil Rivers, for "our country is only an infant country, and cannot choose separately from the oldest countries."

The Opobo chiefs' reference to Bonny indicated that the civil war waged by Ja Ja had done little to alter or upset the prevailing social fabric or kinship ties of the Rivers. The 'child' Opobo could never become the spiritual equal of the 'mother' Bonny, however independent commercially and politically it became.

Macdonald was fortunate enough to find on tour in the Opobo River two of the most experienced agents on the coast, Mitchell of Taylor Laughland and Co., and Zeller of Stuart & Douglas, both of whom had more than fifteen years' experience. Like Boler, they expressed confidentially an opinion in opposition to orders received from home, that the Chiefs would never sign treaties if they knew that they were to be handed over to a trading administration, and that a Crown Colony would answer very well. When Macdonald taxed them with the problem of slavery, both felt that its abolition would benefit the country, "as the slaves who now, as a class, are lazy and indolent which, as whatever they earn goes to their masters, is not altogether to be wondered at, would trade on their own account, and thus assist in the much desired object of opening up the interior."

One agent, Bruce of Miller Brothers, dissented from the others. Although he agreed that the Chiefs

generally would not listen to an extension of the Niger Company's Charter, they would not mind being under a special chartered organisation, but the abolition of slavery would be attended with grave disturbances. Macdonald dismissed Bruce's arguments as being too much influenced by orders from home, although he does not give his reasons for this judgement. Clearly, however, the Commissioner was already beginning to form his conclusions.

These conclusions were strengthened in New Calabar, where the feeling against the Niger Company was very bitter. Macdonald held several meetings in an endeavour to calm the chiefs, but it needed all his tact to make them, as he put it, "see matters in a more reasonable light", and accept a compromise on the question of markets. The Commissioner's promise to investigate, settled the chiefs sufficiently to enable the future government of the country to be discussed. Not surprisingly, they expressed an overwhelming desire for a more direct form of government by Her Majesty, but again the question of slavery came very much to the fore. King George was particularly concerned that "Her Gracious Majesty should not permit them to starve", an event hardly likely as she was reputed to have capital assets of more than £30,000. The Commissioner expressed himself much impressed with the intelligence and

sensibility of the Rivers Chiefs during the eight days he spent in New Calabar; this was a theme to which he was to recur time and time again, in marked contrast to the views of Johnston, and to a lesser degree of Hewett.

At Brass, where Macdonald spent three days, he found the feeling against the Niger Company just as bitter as at New Calabar, not only amongst the natives but also among the white traders. He was presented with a long petition which, he informed the chiefs, would be considered (as would the New Calabar complaints) when he had visited the Niger. Their wishes with regard to future government, which they communicated on April 20th., were hardly surprising: a plea for colonial government, with relief from their "unbearable burdens" and retention of domestic slavery,

At the C.M.S. Mission House Macdonald had an unexpected piece of good fortune in finding Bishop Crowther, who had just returned from the Niger. Crowther was equally sure that an extension of the Charter would be utterly distasteful to the majority of chiefs, who would strongly object to giving the white traders any form of hold over them whatsoever. Asked by Macdonald what in his opinion would be the reaction to the establishment of a colony, he answered that

"some of the chiefs might object at first, fearing the future of their slaves, and they would so object in public, but in private they would one and all be for annexation and Consular government." Some of the Bonny chiefs, he concluded, already used paid Kroo boy labour on their plantations as being in every way more satisfactory than slave labour.[1]

Two features struck the Commissioner on his arrival at Old Calabar on April 12th. One was what he termed "the advanced state of the native chiefs", the other was their complete indifference toward the Niger Company. Old Calabar was not without its problems, however, as Macdonald discovered in a large meeting of all the Kings and the leading chiefs held on April 15th. The meeting lasted from eleven in the morning to six in the evening, and was certainly the most searching and exhausting which the Commissioner undertook. High on the agenda were the alleged encroachments of the Germans from the Cameroons into Old Calabar markets. Unfortunately there was little comfort that Macdonald could offer to the traders, beyond a recommendation to Salisbury that a frontier line between the Oil Rivers Protectorate and the Cameroons ought to be laid down as soon as was convenient. As he was to discover, however, the frontier was

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1. C.M.S. G3/A3/03, Crowther to Lang, 11.4.88.

not a matter which could be settled either easily or quickly.

Another problem which exercised the chiefs was that of the Ekpe[1] secret society under any future administration. Macdonald gives a not inaccurate description of its functions as a "semi-religious, semi-administrative custom", which permeated the political system of Old Calabar. He noted its usefulness, in cases of riot or public disturbance, in compelling the rioters, who would mostly be of the lower orders, to return to their houses. On the other hand, it was often used for oppressing the weak; a man whose house was visited by ekpe could not stir until ekpe was lifted, and in former days, any slave was punished with death if seen by ekpe. Under the hammer blows of European commerce and slave revolts, however, the influence of the society had declined; and several of the Chiefs went to the Commissioner offering "to do away with it from that day, should I wish it", although the more conservative chiefs like Acqua and Henshaw wished for its retention.

It was, however, one of the most powerful of the conservatives, King Duke, who put the Commissioner

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1. Macdonald calls it egbo, the name by which it was known to the traders and missionaries. For an analysis, see Dike, op. cit. & Jones, op. cit. Ekpe means "leopard".

right on the spot by wanting to know why there should be any change in the form of government. His people "were quite content to remain as they were and had always done what the Consul had told them, and were quite capable of governing themselves subject to the protection of Great Britain." Although Macdonald was surprised that this question had not been asked before, it still seemed to catch him off balance, for his answer was a totally inconsequential remark that "only a year ago, one of their number present had ordered a woman to be flogged to death, that he had been found guilty and condemned to death by his fellow Chiefs, but that nobody had dared to put the sentence into execution." If this one example was Macdonald's evidence that there would be anarchy unless there was a change in the administration, it could hardly have been less satisfactory. The Chiefs however let the subject of self-government drop. Macdonald on reflection would probably have done better justice to his case; what is implicit in his remark is his condemnation of the existing consular regime.

Although the replies of the chiefs reflected differences in detail, all were agreed, even King Duke, in their preference for a British colony. Duke's reply indicated that his sole motive in enquiring whether any change in the form of government was necessary was not to

undermine the British position, but to protect his own. All his dislike of change was poured into the reply of himself and his chiefs. It was unjust to abolish domestic slavery, domestic and family relations should not be interfered with, they should have liberty to marry as many wives as they thought proper, and all other customs which were not barbarous should not be disturbed; finally, they should be allowed to retain their land. Henshaw and Acqua followed the Duke line on lands and slaves, with an additional plea for ekpe, the retention of comey, the recovery of lands taken by the Germans and polygamy, although Acqua made the peculiar admission that "in many instances polygamy does not give strength to any who is on it, but we hope through the Gospel light our country will soon be freed." Cobham V. opted for a quiet retirement in requesting the retention of his people and lands during his lifetime and that of his heirs; similarly Eyo Honesty contented himself with the moderate desire that "no changes be made in the customs of the country without the people being gradually prepared for them", in the nature of things a sensible request from a man nearing the end of his life. The replies were completed by two of the lesser lights of Calabar, the Chiefs of Ikoneto, a little further up the Cross River.

and Adiabo, who both plumped for a British colony, probably without realising what it entailed.

The formidable missionary influence, in the person of the Rev. H. Goldie, naturally made its presence felt during the Commissioner's nine day stay in the Cross River. Goldie had been working in the river for over forty years; a scholar, a man of great presence, he was not averse to speaking his mind now the great project of evangelisation on which he had set his heart was likely, at long last, to receive the support of the state. He was quite emphatic that rule by a trading company was not in the best interests of the Efik people, and that to "take us up as a Colony would be, I think the best thing that could be done for the country, especially as we live with our strong-handed German neighbours, against whose inroads the British Protectorate does not afford much security." For the present regime he had nothing but contempt. "This Protectorate, I may notice, is not known, at least is not recognised by Old Calabar. The people up the river carry on their tribal wars as they were wont to do, and keep their customs of blood - sacrificing human victims for the dead, infanticide and cannibalism during war". Duke and one or two others would offer opposition to a colony, but the influence of the British government

would overcome this if "strongly asserted".

Macdonald did not apparently hold individual consultations with the white traders while he was at Calabar, although among them he "found some of the most intelligent and straightforward in the whole Delta". He remarks that they were entirely unanimous as to the benefits of a Consular administration over any other form of government in the Oil Rivers. The word "consular" creates some difficulty here, owing to Macdonald's rather loose use throughout his report of the words "consular" and "colonial", which he seems to regard as interchangeable. Whether the traders really wanted a colonial government with all its trappings, or whether they were satisfied with the present regime of consuls, albeit perhaps amended, was not absolutely clear. There was no doubt however about their rejection of any form of chartered company administration.

After a short interlude in the Cameroons, Macdonald continued his investigations west of the Niger Delta on May 3rd with an interview with Nana, Governor of the Benin River, and its leading trader. Nana's position had been recognized by the British government in a letter written by the late Vice Consul Blair on May 6th, 1885, in which he was appointed

"the executive power through which the decrees of Her Majesty's Government and of the Consular Court are to be exercised or enforced." At the same time he was given a silver stick of office engraved with the royal arms. Why the consul had conceived this comedy to be necessary in the case of Nana and not of the other chiefs in the Rivers who exercised de jure authority is not quite clear. Undoubtedly, however, the act of the Protectorate administration was contradicted by the proclamation delivered by Governor Griffith in February 1886, in which the Colony of Lagos was stated to extend up to and to include the right bank of the Benin River. Since Nana's town was on the right bank, it was technically in Lagos territory, but as the colonial government had done nothing to exercise its jurisdiction in the direction of the Benin River since 1886, Nana was quite unaware of the fact. Beyond pointing out the contradiction, Macdonald made no attempt at this stage to resolve it. Nana himself, would hardly have been unduly concerned as long as his position continued to be recognised. His relations with the Consular authority had always been cordial; Johnston had regarded him as "de jure and de facto ruler of the country between Mahin and Ramos", and had "often called on him to support my authority and to use his power for the settlement of

disputes."[1] Macdonald himself was suitably impressed, regarding Nana's town as "one of the model ones in the Niger Delta" and recognising that he was "undoubtedly the paramount authority in the Zekri district which extends beyond the Forcados River up as far as the Warri creek.", although he was to modify his opinion as to the extend of Nana's authority after he had visited the Niger. So, when the Commissioner faced Nana with the choice of Queen's rule or company rule his answer was predictable. A trading company could not but diminish his own power, which was based completely on trade. His acceptance of a British colony was, however, qualified by his wish that the question of slavery should not "be dealt with rashly" and that there should be no disturbance of polygamy and domestic laws.

Macdonald could not have left the Oil Rivers with any doubt in his own mind about the form of government desired by the inhabitants. He had found that opinion on the Niger Company or any other form of chartered administration varied from rank indifference to downright hostility. He was not himself unaware of the advantages of the extension of the Charter.

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1. F.O. 84/1882, Memo by Johnston on Nana, 6.12.88.

The administration of the Niger Company had without doubt been carried out with "great energy", and an "immense amount of country" had been opened up where law and order now existed, "where a few years ago anarchy and confusion prevailed." Moreover, he felt that the present condition of the West African colonies did not "show that a great amount of energy had been displayed in the past." Doubtless, also extension of the Charter would so enrich the Company that it would be able to afford a better class of official, and carry on its administration more cheaply. Nevertheless, he was firmly of opinion that "the opposition that extension would meet, both in public and secretly, from all the Chiefs and native traders, the number of quarrels and disturbances which would ensue, would more than counterbalance any advantages to be derived." In addition to the opposition of the middleman chiefs, opposition could be expected from the Germans. During his visit to the Cameroons, Macdonald had interviewed the Governor, Baron von Soden, who had expressed his opinion "that the government of Africa by chartered companies was a great mistake." The "independent carrying trade" would oppose an extension in every possible way. It should not therefore be attempted in the face of such unanimous opinion in favour of a

colonial government. Despite his jaundiced view of the other West African colonies, he was convinced that a colonial government was best for the Rivers. He was in no doubt, unless the statistics furnished by the merchants and consuls were utterly fallacious, that a colony would be self-supporting financially. Nor did the questions of slavery and polygamy offer any impediment if managed with tact and deliberation. Lastly he suggested that if a colony was adopted, the boundary between the Niger Company's territories and Lagos should be drawn at the Forcados, and the Oil Rivers should be separate, bounded on the west by the Company's territories and on the east by the Cameroons. Had this suggestion been adopted, many of the later quarrels between the Protectorate and the Company might have been prevented.

Such was Macdonald's report on the Oil Rivers. Lister was for accepting it at once, maintaining that the investigation of the Niger Company's position and administration was quite distinct from the question of the government of the Oil Rivers. Salisbury, however, refused to accept what he regarded as the fiction of two distinct inquiries. He was not yet convinced that it was impossible to bring the whole

Niger Protectorate under one form of government, be it Company, Consul or Colony, or some peculiar mixture of all three. Moreover, he thought that Macdonald had possibly underestimated the ease with which the question of the abolition of slavery could be dealt with: "Queen's government, with continuance of slavery" being of course "impossible". No decision could therefore be taken until the whole of his report was received.[1]

During Macdonald's short visit to London there was much to be done in connection with his forthcoming trip up the Niger. Complex negotiations were conducted with Goldie and the Treasury as to the type of presents to be given to the Muslim emirs - the amount, their shipment, and who was to pay the bill. The Commissioner's request for a private secretary in case his health broke down was granted, and Captain Mockler Ferryman, Oxfordshire Light Infantry, an old friend from Macdonald's musketry school days, was appointed at a salary of £300 a year. On June 28th, all was ready, and the two men left Liverpool to begin the second part of the enquiry. This, like his visit to the Oil Rivers, was conducted with commendable energy. By August 2nd.

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1. F.O. 84/1940 Mins. by T.V.L. and Salsibury, 1889. See also mins. by T.V.L., 26.6.89.

he had reached Lokoja, up the main stream of the Niger. On September 5th. he was back there again, having ascended and descended the Benue. The journey up the Niger to Nupe and Ilorin, (the latter undertaken at the instance of the Colonial Office) took five weeks; the investigations in the Lower Niger, including the Warri, took another three. He reached Akassa on October 31st., where he had to wait, pending a decision by the Foreigh Office, to proceed to the Cameroons on a mission to reach agreement on the Rio del Rey boundary. Owing to delays in the completion of the survey, the mission was called off, and Macdonald returned to England, arriving on December 2nd, and having travelled over 10,000 miles in five months. He spent Christmas at Margate, recovering from fever, before sending in his report early in January.

This document, which ran to 102 pages, was in fact the official report of the whole mission. It was far longer than Macdonald's important memorandum of June 12 1889, and if it omitted the evidence of the Oil Rivers chiefs, it embodied the main conclusions of the Commissioner with regard to the Oil Rivers. Nothing could obscure the fundamental importance of the earlier memorandum which was equal to that of the

report, but the unity of the enquiry in the eyes of the government was maintained. In no technical sense, therefore, was it or is it correct to speak of two reports.

If Macdonald's method of conducting this part of his enquiry was not as original as it had been in the Oil Rivers, this was hardly surprising. The administrative details of his visit were of necessity organised by the Company, he used the Company steamers and its hospitality, and its point of view, as Dr. Flint remarks, "was constantly before him."[1] Even if the Commissioner insisted on conducting his interviews in private, the people could not fail to be impressed by the fact that he had arrived in a Company steamer. This was hardly Macdonald's fault; in part, it was because of the absence of European facilities other than those of the Company on the Niger, in part because of the parsimony of a Treasury which refused to advance sufficient money to reduce the dependence of the enquiry on the Company's goodwill.[2] In the circumstances, the Commissioner's independence of judgement was remarkable.

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1. Flint, Goldie, p. 136

2. F.O. 84/2096 for corresp., and T1/8541 a/18873, mins. by G.L.R. & R.W., 26.12.90 & 30.12.90.

It is important, however, to emphasise again that Macdonald ascended the Niger with his mind already half set against the extension of the Charter into the Oil Rivers. His report was therefore carefully constructed; in the main he defended the Company's rights of jurisdiction against Germany and within the British Protectorate, while, (although he phrased his case with studied moderation and dismissed the grosser charges against the Company) he was severely critical of the Company's mode of exercising its jurisdiction, and his recommendations, if adopted, would have ruined Goldie's carefully constructed monopoly. The drift of the Commissioner's argument was clear; the government of the Niger territories, including the Oil Rivers, was an internal matter. That established, the government of both parts of the Protectorate had heretofore left much to be desired. Since Goldie's monopoly was the indispensable basis of his government, and his administrative system was built up entirely on his commercial regulations, the Commissioner's criticism carefully removed any question of Charter extension, by stipulating conditions of government impossible for the Company to accept.

The first three chapters of the report[1] were devoted to the general question of the treaty rights by which the Company governed. In the Lower Niger (Chapter I), the Company had some 209 treaties, paying an aggregate of £1284 7s. in subsidies. They were all sovereign rights treaties, which were, the Commissioner found with one or two exceptions, understood and upheld by the native signatories. On the Benue the position was far different (Chapter 2). Here the Company had forty treaties, paying out £293 4s. 3d. in subsidies, scattered over some 1240 miles of river bank. Their jurisdiction was minimal, their ability to enforce it negligible, except on the river itself. Macdonald chastised the Company for not defending the pagan tribes against the incursions of the Fulani Emirs' slave raids - a little unfairly perhaps, in view of the vast increase in administrative expenditure that this would have entailed. The Commissioner, in addition, found it not at all probable that powerful Mohammedan Emirs would sign away their rights to the infidel for so little return. His particular investigation into the Company's rights in the Emirate of Nupe was given point by the German

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1. Text in F.O. 84/2109. Where sources are not referred to in the following pages they are taken from this Report, handed in 9.1.90.

complaints. His main conclusion was that the treaty made in 1885 which had given the Company "entire charge of all trading interests in the country" held good, and that the Company had every right to exercise jurisdiction over foreigners. He further concluded that the Company exercised sovereign rights in Nupe on the strength of the Gwandu treaty of 1885, whereby the Emir of Gwandu (Nupe's spiritual overlord) had ceded to the National Africa Company both banks of the Niger/Benue within the Empire. Here Macdonald was on less certain ground. Whether Gwandu could cede the rights of a vassal in this way was open to question, as the Emir of Nupe himself protested. Secondly, Macdonald's failure to visit either Sokoto or Gwandu - an omission which in the circumstances of the inquiry constituted a breach of courtesy, and if his opinion as to the centralised state of the Fulani Empire was correct, was quite unjustifiable - rendered his judgement on the validity of these treaties somewhat suspect. Having reached his conclusion, however, it was natural that he should reject the claims of Hoenigsberg. (Chapter 4.)

Macdonald's conclusions about the Company's treaties must obviously be treated with reservations. He was well aware of the political inconvenience of a wholesale repudiation of the Company's treaties. When he rejected a treaty, therefore, he was obviously certain

of his grounds for doing so. That he found so little that was fraudulent in the making of these treaties was remarkable, but predictable. This is not to question the Commissioner's integrity, merely to draw attention to his blind spots. Undoubtedly, as the Commissioner claimed, most of the chiefs did uphold what they had signed. Their motives for signing were various: protection against a more powerful neighbour, the wish for trade, and so on. The Attah of Idah "had hoped to become fat", but now he had "shrunk up and become dry". But the Commissioner did not visit any disturbed areas on the Niger above the Delta and the Benue, whose inhabitants might have been the very people to question the validity of their treaties.

It was in the area of the Delta, where merchant vied with merchant and consul marched with agent, that the company's rights were most questioned. Bearing in mind Macdonald's attitude to the treaties, it is necessary to examine these rights a little more deeply, in view of the conflicts which were to take place over them in the Oil Rivers.

It will be remembered that when the Commissioner had visited New Calabar, he had only been able to pacify the chiefs by a promise to investigate the question of markets. The redemption of that promise formed the basis of Chapter 5, on the "Idu Question". The background to

the conflict between the New Calabar middlemen and the Company lay in the conclusion by the latter, on March 23 1885 and October 15th. and 16th. 1886, of treaties containing sovereign rights clauses with the Chiefs of Oguta, Omogo and Idu. At the time there was no doubt that at all three of these oil markets the New Calabar men traded in considerable numbers. Even when Macdonald visited the Idu on October 27th. 1889, he found upwards of 100 of the Calabar canoes anchored opposite the town. The change of sovereignty was not however noticed until the Company began to put into force its customs regulations and started levying duties which, understandably, the native traders resented and refused to pay. The Company replied by a proclamation of September 24th,1887, informing the New Calabar chiefs that it would no longer tolerate the infringement of its customs; that no canoes would be allowed to cross the frontier without having previously cleared inward at Akassa and outward again at some port of entry; that the penalty for infringement would be confiscation, and lastly, that within six days all canoes must leave Oguta lake or they would be seized and confiscated.

The Liverpool traders who depended on the New Calabar middlemen, were not disposed to take this lying down. On November 16th. 1887 Messrs. Holt & Cotterell

protested at the Foreign Office against the "high-handed and arbitrary action of the Royal Niger Company in driving the New Calabar people from the markets of Oguta, Omogo and Idu", and the familiar round of accusations and denials began. Johnston took up the cudgels on behalf of the native middlemen and gave it as his opinion that the "Royal Niger Company has as much right to be there [Idu] as at Bonny or Benin".[1] As Johnston's complaints were echoed by Hewett, the Foreign Office told the Company that, pending a decision as to the administration of the Oil Rivers, a customs house should not be established.

The African Association, of which Holt and Cotterell were members, were not content to sit back and allow their markets to be seized while the Foreign Office remonstrated with Goldie. As part of the general negotiations between the Association and the Company towards Charter extension, Rogerson insisted on a settlement of the Idu dispute. After an acrimonious correspondence, some sort of agreement on a customs boundary was reached, without prejudice to political rights, and on September 13th., the African Association informed their agents that the Niger Company boundary would be five miles below Ndomi Creek, Calabar retaining Omogo.[2]

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1. F.O. 84/1882, Johnston to Salisbury, 11.9.88.

2. F.O. 84/1930, R.N.C. to F.O. 26.10.88.

This agreement, based on faulty geography, raised more problems than it solved. In the first place, Omogo was well within the five mile limit; in the second, the native middlemen told Hewett that they had given no authority to the African Association to treat for them with the Company regarding markets.[1]

This last factor determined Hewett to go up to Idu and investigate the situation for himself. He informed the Niger Company of his intention, and asked them to send a representative to amake a temporary delimitation of the frontier. The first hint that the Foreign Office had as to Hewett's intention was a request from the Niger Company that Hewett might wait until Agent General Flint returned from leave, with the expressed desire to know the Consul's instructions on the matter. This sudden unwonted activity on the part of Hewett exasperated the Foreign Office the more when it was followed by a telegram on November 9th. This, without giving any explanations, stated that the Company's right to impose duties at Idu was doubtful, and asked that the Foreign Office should order their abolition, since hostilities threatened. Anderson felt that, with an enquiry impending, "Hewett's sudden activity against the Company at the present moment is

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1. F.O.C.P. 5945, Hewett to Salisbury, 26.12.88.

very unfortunate..... /he/ should be told to hold his hand". The instructions sent to Hewett, however, were completely contradictory. On the one hand he was not to move until he heard further; on the other he was to send a report.[1] Not surprisingly, Hewett interpreted the Foreign Office message to mean implied sanction for his visit, and on November 22, accompanied by the New Calabar chiefs, he went up to Idu. At a meeting in the town, the headmen of Idu agreed that they had signed a paper with the Company, but did not know what it contained. They denied absolutely, according to Hewett, that they had ceded their country to the Company. Having found out the contents of the treaty, they had wished to nullify it, but the Company had refused. "They wanted to continue established trade with New Calabar".[2] Thus prompted, the Foreign Office wrote to the African Association and the Niger Company, suggesting that it would be desirable if they came to some understanding as to the interpretation and validity of their agreement regarding Idu, in order that a clear statement of affairs could be furnished to Macdonald.[3]

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1. ibid., F.O. to Hewett, 9.11, tels.

2. F.O.C.P. 5945, Hewett to Salisbury, 26.12.88.

3. F.O.C.P. 5945, F.O. to African Association, Niger Company, 5.3.89.

The whole affair would have to be inquired into by the Special Commissioner.

Macdonald felt that the question had "assumed dimensions considerably larger than it ever should have done" (a phrase he was to remember in his future disputes with Goldie over this "wretched little village"); for this he blamed "a lamentable want of tact" on the part of the Company, in issuing the notice of September 1887. This "most arbitrary and injudicious" act, "calculated to stir up a vast amount of bad feeling", aroused the Commissioner's wrath for two reasons. In the first place he held that it was quite impossible to expect the New Calabar traders to take their goods for Idu and Oguta via Akassa, a four day return journey by canoe from Bukama and an addition to the round trip of 150 miles. The Commissioner maintained that the least the Company could have done was to place a customs post on the direct route from New Calabar to Oguta, where the traders could have paid duties. Secondly the limit of six days was also unjust; at least four months' notice should have been given under the Anglo-German agreement of 1885. This act had resulted in a considerable loss to the New Calabar traders during the peak trading month of September since they had been unable to gather in their trust.

With regard to the political rights of Idu, the Commissioner's inquiry was inconclusive. The argument put forward by the Calabar and Idu traders, that the latter did not know what they were doing when they signed the treaties, got short shrift. He "could not take as an excuse the mere statement of an African chief that he did not understand what he was doing when he signed a Treaty as being sufficient to render that Treaty null and void; for how was I to know [he asked the New Calabar chiefs on April 2nd 1889] that they themselves might not, to suit their convenience, at some future time, say that they did not understand what they were doing when they signed the Protection Treaty with Great Britain?"

On the other hand, when Macdonald visited Idu, on October 27th., he was left in little doubt as to the influence of New Calabar. The chiefs in private interview repudiated the rule of the Company, and protested that they had not ceded their country to anybody. Macdonald's suspicion of New Calabar pressure was given further impetus when at this moment the interview was interrupted by a number of New Calabar "boys", who refused to leave or to allow the Chiefs of Idu to accept the present Macdonald offered, and "altogether behaved in a very arbitrary manner, plainly

showing that though they were the friends of the Idus, they certainly were pro tem. their masters."

In this situation, Macdonald put the blame fairly and squarely on the Company. Had the Niger Company at once established a factory at Idu the people would have been quite willing to acknowledge the treaties. The Company's failure to establish a factory forewarned the Calabar men that their markets were threatened, and they did what they could to make their authority paramount at Idu, in which, Macdonald concluded, they had succeeded. In the circumstances, the Company had lost its claim to Idu and would do well to withdraw its frontier to the Oratshi end of the Ndoni River, and there establish a customs house at which traders from the New Calabar River could pay duties. In doing this the Company would only lose a small amount of trade done at Gregani and Omogo,[1] and the New Calabar traders would have no further grounds for complaint. As for the geographical question, the Oratshi and Oguta lake were clearly within the basin of the Niger (the latter being only fourteen miles from the main river); these the Company would retain.

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1. Goldie testified himself that the Company had hitherto spent much without any return. F.O.C.P. 5945. R.N.C. to F.O. 29.1.89.

In Chapter VI, Macdonald considered the complaints of the Brass men as represented by the long petition he had received from them whilst in the Rivers, and by a statement of A.A.Whitehouse, Chief Agent for Harrison's, for the European traders. Macdonald's diagnosis was sound enough. Amidst all the verbiage of the Brass men, the question at the heart of the dispute was that of markets. There was no doubt that the Brass traders drew their oil supply from places which were now closed to them, since the granting of the Charter. If they now wished to trade they had to go to one particular place, called a port of entry, pay licence and duty fees, and then they could only trade after clearing inwards at Akassa. To Macdonald this was wrong. According to his interpretation of Article XXVII of the Company's Regulations, all the Oil Rivers natives were "natives" of the Niger, and therefore not only need not pay licences, but could trade internally where they wished. This claim of Macdonald's was of fundamental importance, for, if established, it would have ruined Goldie's carefully constructed monopoly, which was geared to the exclusion of the middlemen from the Niger. It also pinned the Company down. Hitherto they had claimed the best of both worlds, by treating the Brass men as foreigners commercially but as natives jurisdictionally,

so that they could punish them in their own courts. At Macdonald's instigation, Moore, the Chief Justice, communicated with the Company as to their interpretation of Regulation XXVII. There is no record of Goldie's precise reaction, beyond a statement by the Commissioner in Chapter XII (p.78) that his own opinion differed from the Council's. Macdonald's contention was perfectly logical, and in tune with government policy. Only one British Protectorate had been established in 1885, the administration of part of which had been turned over to the Company. This part was not defined as to boundaries, and could be extended by treaty as the Protectorate was opened up. It could even include the whole Protectorate if circumstances permitted the extension of the Charter. The legal existence of a separate protectorate, of two distinct areas of jurisdiction, was not in fact recognised until 1893. Until then, a Brass man and a Nupe were natives of the Niger territories, and failure either on the part of Goldie to recognise this, or more particularly on the part of the British Government to insist on one government for both the Niger and the Oil Rivers, before and after that date, was at the root of all subsequent troubles in the area.

Failing Charter extension, which he rejected, Macdonald could have no illusions about the acceptance

of his doctrine by the Company. In the circumstances, he confined himself to suggestions for the immediate easing of the Brass men's grievances. The closing of their sources of oil supply was a complaint which, beyond recommending the case to the Company for rectification, Macdonald did not feel able to handle. The grievance represented by the Brassmen's being forced to clear at Akassa, a twelve hour journey often in rough seas, could be remedied by the establishment of a customs house at Ekole. If the Commissioner was little more than sympathetic, it was because he witnessed in Brass little evidence of actual hardship, which was to follow the collapse in oil prices of 1894. His general impression was that the majority of the middlemen, Kings and Chiefs, were well-to-do and "could easily trade in the Niger and make a profit, paying the duties now in force." The commercial complaints of Whitehouse, echoing the complaints of the African Association, generally therefore merited little attention from the Commissioner.

If the Brass question seemed to Macdonald relatively straightforward, the question of the Company's jurisdiction in the Forcados (Chapter VI) was anything but simple. Here Company, Consul and Colony all contested jurisdiction. It was, however, a Manchester firm

Messrs. Blackstock and Co., who had close links with Hutton and Osborne of the African Association, who in February 1888 first raised the question of the Forcados with the Foreign Office, by posing the seemingly innocent question whether the Forcados had in fact been included in the Charter granted to the Niger Company.[1] The Foreign Office, instead of referring to the Niger Company or Consul Hewett, still in Idu, for observations as to the geographical position of the river, delivered an armchair reply to the effect that the Forcados was not included in the territories under the jurisdiction of the Company.[2] Armed with the Foreign Office reply, Messrs. Blackstock proceeded to collect evidence from the Coast, and on July 30th. protested against the Royal Niger Company's encroachment in the Forcados River, which was independent territory, enclosing as their evidence agreements by the Company annexing the Forcados. These (unfortunately for Goldie) contained the monopoly clauses of pre-Charter days.[3] Blackstock's connections in Lagos bore fruit in a protest by the Governor which reached the Foreign Office *via* the Colonial Office on

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1. F.O. 84/1917. Messrs. Blackstock to F.O., 27.2.88.
2. *ibid*. F.O. to Messrs. Blackstock, 7.3.88.
3. F.O. 84/1925. Blackstock & Co. to F.O., 30.7.88.

September 6th. Moloney wished to know by what right the Company could extend their jurisdiction over part of the British Protectorate, and outside their sphere of influence or rule, and reiterated the importance of the Forcados as a port for Lagos.[1] The Company's reply to Blackstock's letter was extremely evasive, confining itself to dismissing the latter's interpretation of the agreements as erroneous: for the monopoly clauses were only "inserted for political reasons into the earliest treaties made by the Company and the monopoly of trade therein contained was always intended to be surrendered so soon as Her Majesty's protection had been extended to the respective territories." This protection had now been extended and therefore Forcados fell "within Clause 14 of the Charter".[2] Anderson's suspicions were not unnaturally aroused by Goldie's failure to send copies of the treaties, and he brushed aside his arguments by pointing out that the agreements complained of were said to have been made during the present year, and that anyway any claim that the natives should only have intercourse with foreigners through the Company was clearly improper and must be abrogated.[3]

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1. F.O. 84/1927. C.O. to F.O. 6.9.88. Moloney to C.O., 11.7.88.
2. F.O. 84/1925. R.N.C. to F.O., 9.8.88.
3. F.O. 84/1926. F.O. to R.N.C. 17.8.88.

If Anderson was critical of the Niger Company's proceedings, this did not mean he was prepared to admit the claims of Lagos. Even if geography had not confirmed what Foreign Office had not beem prepared to admit six months before, viz. that the Forcados was withingthe basin of the Niger and a natural outlet, the Forcados was nothing to do with Lagos. Their trade, in using it for access, would always have the full advantage of the free transit and navigation clauses of the Act of Berlin.[1] On October 27th. therefore, the Foreign Office informed the Company that their treaties in the Forcados would be sanctioned on the understanding that the Company had no right to any monopoly under them, that any clauses which provided that the Company should be an exclusive medium between natives and foreigners should be dropped as inconsistent with the Anglo-German agreement and with the Charter, and that transit trade to Lagos should have the full benefit of the Berlin Act.[2] This the Company accepted, November 1st. 1888.

The whole affair might have ended there had not Consul Hewett suddenly awakened from his customary torpor and visited the Forcados River. That he should protest against the Niger Company's treaties was

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1. F.O. 84/1927. C.O. to F.O., 6.9.88. Mins by H.P.A.

2. F.O. 84/1930. F.O. to R.N.C. 27.10.88. The C.O. agreed to the F.O. proposal, 10.10., F.O. 84/1929.

predictable, his grounds being that the 1884 treaty made by him with Nana covered the whole area.[1] His next act was not. For he proceeded to take possession of the treaties which offended him most, those with Goolah and Burutu, and gave leave to Nana to punish his "rebellious subjects", which that merry monarch was not backward in doing. His message also reported news of a telegram from Akassa, "England confirms our treaty concluded with Forcados" and ended with a plea to the bewildered Foreign Office for instructions.[2] Anderson was thoroughly annoyed; here was another example of Hewett's sudden inconvenient activity against the Company, in cancelling treaties without authority. On the other hand the Niger Company was no better, having "lied about sanctions".[3] There was now no alternative but to suspend assent to the treaties and refer the matter to the Commissioner.[4]

When Macdonald interviewed Nana on May 3rd, 1889, the latter not unnaturally claimed the patrimony presented to him by Hewett, and asserted that the Forcados and the territory as far as Ramos was under his jurisdiction. Since there were no chiefs from the Forcados present at the meeting there was no one to

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1. F.O. 84/1881. Hewett to Salisbury, 3.11.88.
2. ibid. Hewett to Salisbury, 5.11.88.
3. ibid.Min. by H.P.A., 1.12.

deny his claim. On October 29th., the Chiefs of Burutu and Goolah asserted the opposite to the Commissioner: they were not subjects of Nana, they had signed a treaty with the Niger Company which they understood, and they looked upon the Company as their protector and master. The apparently contradictory replies threw into relief the whole problem of attempting to judge questions of African jurisdiction by European standards. As the chiefs of Burutu admitted: "Nana's mother was a Goolah woman and they were and always had been very good friends of his.....they could not, of course, fight Nana.... /but/ they were quite an independent town, and had never made treaties with anybody else except the Niger Company." That Nana's patrimony rested on influence, trade and above all kinship ties, and that these extended as far as the Ramos, or even coincided with the spread of the Itsekiri people, was doubtless true, but in European terms Nana "ruled" little more than his own slaves. The chiefs were equally right in stating that they had signed no other treaty than with the Company; their relations with Nana had never needed such formalisation. Macdonald, therefore, could not see that Nana had made out a case with regard to Burutu and Goolah.

In the light of modern knowledge it is easy to fault Macdonald, but hardly realistic to expect him to have stepped outside his own environment. Having conceded to the Company the two towns at the mouth of the Forcados, it was logical for him to concede their claims on the rest of the left bank. What was unsatisfactory was his failure to investigate those claims in detail, a failure for which he gives no reason. As Flint points out, some of the treaties were deliberate forgeries. The Chiefs alleged to have signed them were illiterate, yet the crosses on the originals were all identical, neat and unsmudged, undoubtedly the work of a literate hand.[1] Nooone regretted more than the Commissioner and Consul General of the Oil Rivers Protectorate the easy concessions of the Company claims on the Forcados that he had made in his Report.

Again Macdonald put his finger on the question most likely to lead to disputes in the future - that of markets. A number of European merchants[2] had established themselves at Warri, drawing oil from the Urhobo markets as well as from some in the Warri branch. They all complained of encroachments by the Company into the markets, and the Commissioner admitted that a good many of their sources of supply lay within the Company's

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1. Flint, op. cit., p. 188

2. Messrs. Hutton & Osborne, Miller Brothers, J. Pinnock, Bey & Zimmer.

recently acquired territories. He made no attempt to make any recommendations as to delimitation, evading the issue by remarking that some arrangement would have to be made, the form of which he was unable to say until the nature of the future government of the Oil Rivers was settled.

Macdonald's treatment of the Forcados question, even allowing for its complexity, was most unsatisfactory. The nature of his investigations was rudimentary by his own standard, and in allowing the Niger Company's claims, he not only justified a fraud which he would have spotted on examination of the treaties, but contradicted his early sounder judgement that "Nana is.....undoubtedly the paramount authority in the Jekri District, which extends beyond the Forcados River up as far as the Warri Creek."[1] Lastly, by failing to examine completely conflicting claims over markets and political jurisdiction, he still left grounds for dispute, which his recommendation that the Oil Rivers west of the Forcados might be annexed by Lagos could not, in the absence of geographical definition, resolve.

Lagos and Colonial Office concern extended beyond the Forcados to the administration of the oil Rivers and Niger generally, and whilst in Lagos,

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1. F.O. 84/1940. Macdonald to Salisbury, 12.6.89.

Macdonald had received a petition from a large number of Lagos merchants, members of the Council, and others, condemning the policy of the Company from first to last.[1] This petition was by no means isolated. On May 11th. 1888 a large meeting had been convened in Lagos of traders small and large, to protest against the handing over of the Oil Rivers to a private trading company.[2] An anxious question from Anderson as to whether the Governor agreed with the memorialists about the interests of Lagos, and whether the meeting was really representative,[3] provoked a Colonial Office response which laid bare the conflicting motives and inner tensions which characterised its whole attitude towards expansion into the Delta and the future of the Oil Rivers. According to Antrobus, Moloney agreed with the memorialists and recommended that the Rivers to the West of the Niger Company's territories should anyway be annexed to Lagos, both in the interests of the small traders and in order to secure the fine harbour of the Forcados. Antrobus himself was at a loss to understand why "it is desired to put the whole of the Oil Rivers under the Niger Company." He felt sure that the result would be

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1. See Report, also C.O. 147/70, Moloney to C.O. 12.3.89.
2. Lagos Observer, 26.5.88
3. F.O. 84/1924, C.O. to F.O. 8.7. Min. by H.P.A., 19.7.88.

greatly to impoverish Lagos, and if the territories could not be left as they were "the best course would perhaps be to form the western rivers at any rate into a separate colony under the Governor of Lagos, just as Zululand is under the Governor of Natal, or British Bechuanaland under the Governor of the Cape." Meade, however, was "not at all ambitious of taking over even the Western Rivers. Mr. Moloney is not a safe guide in a thing of this kind. He sees the aggrandisement of the Colony and consequently that of Mr. Moloney. We had better not encourage this scheme. We may be driven into it but as long as these districts can govern themselves so let them remain.....In future the district may become ripe for Colonial Government."[1]

The lack of any unified policy on the part of Colonial Office officialdom, and of support for the man on the spot, went far, in the long run, to perpetuate those abuses of which Antrobus so bitterly complained. In the short term, by this negative policy, Lagos was prevented from exercising the influence which she might have done on the decisions of 1889 and 1890 about the future of the Oil Rivers. Macdonald, instead of being confronted with a coherent and sustained body of protest based on principle, with the support of the whole community, was presented with a niggling, partisan account

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1. 1. C.O. 147/68. F.O. to C.O., 28.7.88. Mins. by R.L.A. 13.8. & R.M. 20.8.88.

of petty abuses from the trading concerns, which he had no difficulty in dismissing. The petition of 1889, as representing the whole Lagos case, made an abysmal showing. Twelve of its signatories were ex-employees of the Company, who had been dismissed for various offences which ranged from drunkenness to fraud, and one was an ex-convict, who had been sentenced by the Consular authorities in the Rivers for slave-trading. The other signatories were agents of the various Lagos firms. In one point only did Macdonald concede (Chapter VIII) that they had a case. This was on the question of the small traders who dealt in cloth, calabashes etc., in the Niger, on whom he agreed the 20% duty and the £50 licence fee charged by the Company bore too harshly. His recommendation that the former should be reduced to 5% or abolished altogether, and that the latter should be reduced to a hawker's licence of £5 might have done much, if adopted, to remove the genuine grievances of the native traders against the Company.

The first eight chapters of the Commissioner's report were primarily devoted to the Company's treaty rights in its own territories and its claims to rule in the Oil Rivers. The next eight give a unique picture of the workings of a chartered company administration in tropical Africa. Much of this material is not

relevant to the Oil Rivers, or to the question of charter extension.[1] Macdonald did point, however, to a number of reforms and defects which ought to be remedied if Company rule was to be extended. His severest censure was reserved for the administration of justice (Chapter XII). Macdonald was of the opinion that the judicial powers possessed by the officers of the Company should be curtailed, particularly those of the District Agents, who should not have the power of passing sentence of death on a native. Macdonald was well aware that he was touching the weakest spot in the Company's armour, for the administration had been racked by a series of judicial scandals.[2]

The Commissioner was, however most impressed by the constabulary (Chapter XI). This consisted of 424 men, about 250 of whom were from the Gold Coast, 100 were Hausa, and the rest were Yoruba. The men were mostly armed with Snider rifles, in addition to which the forces possessed excellent artillery with plentiful supplies of ammunition. The total cost of the force amounted to £10,000 per annum. On July 31st. at Lokoja, Macdonald inspected the troops, which were put through several manoeuvres for his

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1. An adequate treatment of these aspects of the Macdonald report is given by Flint, Goldie, pp. 142-152.

2. Ibid.

benefit, and he was "exceedingly struck with the steadiness and general excellence in drill shown by both infantry and artillery, the latter being especially smart". During the twelve months to June 1889 there had been only eight courts martial (none of them for serious offences) and only four bad characters discharged. There was no desertions. The Commissioner had only one criticism-the force was under-strength; and one doubt - whether the Hausas would fight against their co-religionists. The establishment of the West Africa Frontier Force disposed of the first, and the Nupe campaign disposed of the second.

The Commissioner's examination of the Company's stations (Chapter X) and steamers (Chapter IX) revealed what might have been expected. The stations were most elaborate, the resources in men and boats most concentrated, in the palm-oil belt south of Onitsha, whence the Company drew 85% of its revenue. Above Lokoja, on both the Niger and the Benue, effective occupation consisted of little more than a clerk and a warehouse. In all the 500 miles of the Benue there were but seven stations, of which only Ibi justified the name. The Commissioner's call for more stations revealed the implicit train of his thought. The Company's resources were obviously stretched to the limit,

the task of developing what they had would need all their energy over the next few years. It was to be doubted, even assuming the superhuman political difficulties could be solved, whether their resources, increased by joining with the African Association, could cope with and govern a territory stretching along 500 miles of seaboard, the extent of whose interior could only be estimated, and which already did a trade twice as big as that of the Niger Company's territory, unless the Company was so drastically reformed as completely to alter its character.

As might have been expected, the Commissioner was critical of the Company's trading policy (Chapters XIV to XV). His meaning was clear; there could be no Charter extension unless the interests of the native trader were safeguarded. Reform must come first, the native trader must be admitted to the Niger, if not free, then, as a native outside the Rivers, on the £5 licence fee (unless of course he was engaging in the large export trade). Similarly Macdonald took exception to the regulation that insisted on traders conducting their negotiations for land for commercial use through the Company. This was a breach of Article 14 of the Charter and would have to stop. The system of ports entry was likewise attacked, in that traders were forced to trade where the Company was established;

moreover, although the system protected revenue, it limited the amount of trade which could be done, since the negro "will not go far from his home to trade." The complaints of the Oil Rivers merchants about having to enter through Akassa he thought justified, and recommended customs houses should be established at Ekole and Warri. Whilst Macdonald generally accepted the Company's contention that the money raised through revenue did not exceed the money spent, and that therefore there was no breach of the Anglo-German agreement, he thought the incidence of some duties was unfair. The export duty of 1s. 6d. per hundredweight on palm kernels, or nearly 25%, was much too high and should be reduced. Profits on kernels were running at a third of that on oil. Therefore, the difference could be made up by raising the duty on oil and placing a small import duty on Manchester goods. With regard to import duties, that of 2s. per gallon on spirits he thought high but justified. He argued, however, that there was little relation between the duty and the incidence of drunkenness, and that the duty could be altered without any perceptible effect on the people. In the Oil Rivers, for instance, which were "flooded with gin and rum", he saw but little drunkenness;, the greater part of the gin imported (over 1½ million

gallons per annum) finding its way to the interior. The duty on trade guns he thought prohibitive, and if lowered would produce a larger revenue.

Though Macdonald judged the German accusations that the Company's revenue exceeded its administrative expenditure to be wrong, he turned his own argument into a criticism of the Company's trading policy. The amounts raised from duties were judged to be fair, but the Company needed to spend more on building new stations, particularly when the Benue was further opened up. There was only one way in which it could increase its revenue without raising its duties and that was by encouraging more trade. More trade would come with more traders; hence the suggestions for reform to make trade easier. The logic of the argument escaped Goldie. In 1895 he was still arguing that the only way to raise revenue was to increase duties.[1]

If there was an obstacle to the establishment of a colony, and a circumstance favouring the extension of the Charter, it was the question of slavery, and Macdonald devoted his penultimate chapter to a careful analysis of this problem. His argument centred around the mildness of slavery in the Rivers, where it existed

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1. R.N.C. Papers I The public revenue of the Niger Company, by Goldie 9.12.95.

in the form of domestic servitude, as compared with the area north of Lokoja, where slave-trading was still prevalent. He maintained that in its form in the Rivers, it still existed sub rosa in Lagos and in the other West African colonies - obviously a key point in his argument for colonial rule. Domestic slavery was in no way burdensome to the slaves, who could acquire property and were themselves frequently the owners of slaves. They had their rights and privileges, which protected them against ill-treatment, and those that rose to be rich traders became a great power in the land. Most of the leading men in the Rivers were ex-slaves, such as Yellow Duke, Ja Ja, Waribo, Oko Jumbo and William Kia. Human sacrifice did exist in the lower Rivers, but the victims were usually prisoners of war, not domestic slaves. With judicious tact and prudence, the question of the abolition of domestic servitude really presented no great difficulties. To stop the slave raiding by the Emirs in the Company's territories would necessitate an appeal to arms, and this, Macdonald felt, should be done as soon as the Company's constabulary was strengthened, and certainly before the raiders established themselves south of the Benue. By posing two distinct problems on the slavery issue, the second of which would require all the

Company's energy, while the first was of no great moment but anyway required different handling, the Commissioner directed the Company's attention politely but firmly away from the Rivers.

If Macdonald dismissed the graver charges of atrocity against the Company, the general tenor of his report amounted to a severe criticism of the way in which the Company conducted its affairs. The defects in the administration, the Commissioner argued, arose from the fundamental fault of employing commercial agents on administrative work. There could be ~~more~~ no more talk of government by traders in the Oil Rivers. A colonial administration was in accordance with the wish of the people of the country; it would remove all fear of monopoly; relations with foreign powers would be rendered easier; and, lastly, the Government of a Colony could be much more easily instituted and enforced than that of a Chartered Company. The country was large and rich, totally unexplored or worked beyond the coastal strip, and "if the administration were carried out in an energetic yet prudent manner, and the attention of the Executive devoted, at any rate at first, to opening and civilizing the country and establishing it on a firm financial basis, rather than to outward forms, the Colony of the Oil Rivers would be in every way be a success." To prepare the way for a

Colony, a strong Consular administration should be established, with a consul in each river, having a sufficient force of constabulary and armed launches to open up the country, and using the power and influence of the middleman chiefs.

Whilst Macdonald had been engaged on his enquiry, the British government had been able to postpone any action on the Niger question. This had not prevented complaints from continuing to come in, or the traders from pursuing their policy of Charter extension in an endeavour to force the government's hand. Germany duly appointed her own investigator, Herr von Puttkamer, Acting Consul General at Lagos and a nephew of Bismarck.[1] He visited the Niger during the first three months of 1889, and his report was as might have been expected.[2] The Germans committed a tactical blunder by publishing ~~their~~ report[3] which enabled the Foreign Office to treat Puttkamer as a hostile witness before the Commissioner.[4] Much of the steam was taken out of the German complaints by the assurance, given as

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1. Described to Lister as "a drunken brawling brute whose chief passion after drink is hatred of England and everything English.". F.O. 84/1881, R.N.C. to F.O. 21.3.89., T.V.L. to Salisbury 23.3.89.
2. Communicated to F.O. by Leyden, F.O.C.P. 5945 7.10.89
3. Despite pressure, the Macdonald report was never published, and access to it remained closed until 1952.
4. F.O. 84/1991. Min. by H.P.A. 23.3.

part of the 1890 Agreement, that a fresh start should be made with regard to the Niger, and that a chartered company should not have the administration of the Oil Rivers.[1] This assurance involved no great hardship, since by then the Government had made up its mind.

It was ironic that just when the traders achieved their greatest triumph, the agreement to amalgamate between the Royal Niger Company and the African Association,[2] the government should have suspended action on the Niger question. The fact of amalgamation did however provoke a discussion as to the grounds on which an extension of the Charter might be recommended. The conditions were stringent. Pauncefote was quite adamant that all rival trading interests should be satisfied first, and that then it would be necessary to obtain the consent of the Oil Rivers chiefs by written agreement which must contain mention of the Niger Company. No move could be made until the shipping interests had been satisfied; Rogerson must not be in such a hurry.[3] The most that could be done

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1. F.O.C.P. 6146, Malet to Salisbury 21.6.90. Enc. H.P.A. 21.6.90. Hoenigsberg's death in 1891 enabled the German Government quietly to drop his case. F.O. 84/2174, F.O. to R.N.C. 5.9.91.

2. F.O. 84/1929. Afr. Assoc. to F.O. 6.10.88. This agreement was conditional on Charter extension.

3. F.O. 84/1930.R.N.C. to F.O. 12.10.88. Mins. by J.P. 13.10.88. on joint memo. Rogerson Goldie, adducing reasons in favour of amalgamation and extension of the Charter.

was to authorize Wright, the Treasury solicitor, to suggest a procedure for extending the Charter;[1] but even for this there was no haste, as the question of whether fusion was to be accepted could not be decided until Macdonald had reported.

Faced with these conditions and difficulties, in particular the superhuman task of trying to persuade the Rivers chiefs to accept Niger Company rule, the alliance began to drift apart. Rumours began to leak out of an amalgamation, and the shipowners, whose opposition had always been implacable, began to mobilise once more. Letters to the Press demanded to know why Her Majesty's Government had appointed a Special Commissioner when at the same time they were planning to hand over the Rivers to Goldie. By one of these letters Goldie was provoked into a swinging attack on the Crown Colony system, and into a most injudicious statement that 7/8 of the merchants trading in the Oil Rivers desired the extension of the Company's Charter.[2] This leak of the agreement spelt its end. In the uproar which followed, J. Holt and a number of other firms party to the agreement changed sides. They were well aware of the impact such a public announcement would

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1. F.O. 84/1932. Wright to F.O., 9.11.88. Min. by H.P.A. 26.11.88.

2. The Times, 3.1.89.

have in the Rivers, and that the people would "never consent to the Royal Niger Company having sovereign or other rights over their territory."[1] The only chance now of avoiding the rule of the ubiquitous Crown Colony official was for Liverpool to break with Goldie and go on alone. On February 5th,1889 Rogerson informed Hewett that "the Association would rather have a distinct and separate Company with a separate Charter".[2] But the Liverpool interest had entirely disintegrated. Holt, Stuart and Douglas, and Miller Brother would now have nothing more to do with any form of chartered government. When Rogerson came to draft his articles of amalgamation for the Liverpool firms only, he found four companies left. Nevertheless, he pressed on with his scheme, and although amalgamation with the Niger Company was not excluded, the main aim of the new company was a separate charter of its own. In the event of future disagreements with the Niger Company, the government was to fix the line of demarcation between the two concerns.[3] By June the amalgamation was complete, and a new company, the African Association Ltd., was born. It was too late.

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1. F.O.C.P. 5945. Holt to F.O. 29.1.89. p.
2. F.O. 84/1940, Macdonald to Salisbury, 12.6.89.
3. F.O. 84/1992, papers communicated by Rogerson, 3.4.89.

In the first place, the Foreign Office refused to accept that a smaller concern could succeed where a larger one had failed. Anderson expressed the official line quite firmly: "Macdonald has instructions to report on the expediency of extending the existing Charter, for which Rogerson's association petitioned, but he has not any instruction as to the administration of the Oil Rivers by another Company; consequently the question put is not one that can be entertained."[1] In the second place, the opposition to the charter swelled by the defecting Liverpool firms, had assumed truly formidable proportions. The Foreign Office was inundated with protests from shipping companies, firms doing trade in the Rivers, and chambers of commerce up and down the country.[2] During the summer, the shipowners won over two formidable allies: the Liverpool Chamber of Commerce, which produced a monster petition signed by twenty-one West African Companies,[3] and Lord Hartington the Liberal Unionist leader, who threatened to reinforce the agitation of the Liverpool M.P.'s in the Commons with a debate in the Lords. In the midst of all this, Macdonald's

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1. Ibid. Min. by H.P.A., 3.4.89, on interview with Rogerson.

2. See F.O.C.P., 5945, passim.

3. F.O. 84/1998, Liverpool Chamber to F.O., 28.6.89.

memorandum arrived, and on the basis of this new information Salisbury informed Hartington that the Oil Rivers would not be included in the Company's Charter without the giving of such notice as would enable the objectors to bring the matter before Parliament. In this tortuous way Salisbury let it be known that he had "pretty well" made up his mind against the extension of the Niger Company's Charter.[1] If the Foreign Office failed to still the agitation, they were now clearly dissociated from any of its ambitions. Individual protests continued to pour in throughout the remainder of the year, and the increasingly desperate intrigues of the African Association reached a climax in a formal petition sent in on January 8th 1890.[2] Speculation about the Charter continued throughout the early part of 1890 and it was not until August, when the Foreign Office stated in straightforward language to the Liverpool Chamber of Commerce that "Her Majesty's Government have no intention of handing over the country in question to a Chartered Company", that it was in large measure stilled.[3] As for Goldie, he had long turned his

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1. F.O. 84/1999. Hartington to Ferguson, 18.7.89. Min. by S.
2. F.O. 84/2072. African Assoc. to Salisbury, 8.1.90.
3. F.O.C.P. 6098, F.O. to Liverpool Chamber, 15.8.90.

back on his ineffective Liverpool colleagues. He had much else to think about. The French were beginning to move again in the north, a minor internal crisis had been created by the resignation of Pinnock, one of the founder directors of 1879, and any moment there would be renewed pressure from the government as a result of the Macdonald report. In July 1889, he told his shareholders "It has been repeatedly stated that the Royal Niger Company has sought for the extension of its jurisdiction over the adjacent maritime regions generally known as the Oil Rivers.....I wish to give a positive denial to these statements."[1]

Goldie's concern to have what he held was based on a shrewd assessment of what the Macdonald report might contain. That the government had not abandoned Charter extension solely because of the opposition of shippers and traders in England was obvious; they had never shown such susceptibility before. The appointment of a Special Commissioner and his report, condemning Charter extension, represented a real setback to Goldie. Whatever form the future administration of the Oil Rivers would take, it would not fail to provide a basis for comparison with the government of

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1.R.N.C. Papers, Vol. I. Proc. at 9th. Ord. Gen. Meeting, 26.7.89.

the Company's sphere. Moreover, the implicit rejection of his arguments concerning the superiority of chartered government, as against the more orthodox colonial form, seemed to him peculiarly significant. Henceforward the Niger Company was on trial, and on the defensive, and Goldie rapidly developed a policy of resistance to everything. His relations with the future Oil Rivers administration were for this reason never to be easy.

The Macdonald report, however, had implications beyond those that touched the Niger Company. In the partition of Africa, the device of the Chartered Company had been regarded as a way by which government could obtain and administer territory on the cheap, whilst escaping responsibility for acts of jurisdiction. For the first time this method had been tested and found wanting; more especially, it was found impossible for use as a means of delegating authority, when a decision had been made to do so. This was of fundamental importance. The doctrine that a government could not escape responsibility for the powers it delegated had come home to roost. The Macdonald report marks a turning-point in the history of late Victorial expansion. The faults of a chartered company were laid bare.

These faults were confirmed by the collapse of the East Africa Company, and the antics of the South Africa company on the Transvaal border. For the first time the doctrine that imperial rule was the only fit rule was forcibly asserted. There were to be no more charters for Africa; the new instrument was to be the Foreign Office protectorate, until the area was ready for Crown Colony rule.

Lastly, Macdonald's advocacy of a flexible colonial system in the Report was completely new. His concern to consult the African and use his influence, combined with his vigorous belief in direct rule, dedicated to stamping out "barbaric" abuses and fostering free trade and social welfare, was a new mixture, not entirely uninfluenced by his experiences in Egypt. In laying down a policy of social development in Africa, Macdonald anticipated Chamberlain by five years. It was a unique and just honour for the government to ask him to implement his own proposals, but faced with the report of January 1890 they had little other choice.

CHAPTER FIVE

GENESIS OF AN ADMINISTRATION

The government's decision to act on the Macdonald report did not come before time, for, administratively, matters in the Oil Rivers had gone from bad to worse. Hewett finally left the coast in September 1889, a sick and broken man, but it was not until November that he bothered to inform the Foreign Office that he had left no one in charge.[1] The consular officer for the Congo, Annesley, returning to his post, was immediately ordered to take charge. For the first time the government recognised that the task was beyond the capacity of one man, and authorised, on Macdonald's recommendation, the appointment of unpaid consular agents from among the traders.[2] Four men accepted appointment in this capacity: Gillies[3] and Wright at Old Calabar, Munro at Bonny, and Gierl at Opobo. Their powers were ill-defined, although they probably presided over what was left of

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1. F.O. 84/1941. Hewett to F.O. 25.11.

2. ibid. Min. by H.P.A., 16.7.89. Macdonald impressed on Anderson the likelihood of fresh trouble if this was not done, owing to Hewett's long periods of absence from H.Q. and to "his haphazard method of dealing with his correspondence."

3. Gillies died on May 19th, 1890.

Johnston's Governing Councils when Hewett had finished emasculating them. Their appointment made little impact, however. The senior naval officer at Bonny, Captain Stopford, felt that the administration had got beyond the Consul and gunboat stage. He refused to have anything to do with the consul's plans to use his men as a police force to chastise the inhabitants and seize their arms.[1] The Admiralty agreed, and Wells, the Admiral, suggested that the consul should form his own police force.[2] The Admiralty was not the only department of government to complain. The Board of Customs experienced difficulties in obtaining consular certificates of landing of goods exported from the United Kingdom, and wanted to know if all action stopped when the Consul was absent.[3] The Colonial Office expressed annoyance at being kept in the dark about future arrangements for government. Herbert's caustic comment about the Foreign Office habit of sending "us things we do not want" and omitting "those we should like to see", was no more than just in the case of Macdonald's memorandum on the Oil Rivers, which was communicated to the Colonial Office on January 26th, 1891, eighteen months after it was written![4]

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1. F.O. 84/2020. Annesley, to F.O., 27.2.90.
2. F.O. 84/2004. Admiralty to F.O., 14.10.89 with incl.
3. F.O.C.P. 5945. Customs to F.O. 4.6.89.
4. C.O. 147/78, F.O. to C.O., 13.5.90. Min. by A.W.L.H., 26.1.91.

The Foreign Office policy, or lack of it, came under fire on the coast as well. Annesley, overwhelmed by the burdens of endeavouring to administer a country the size of Burma, had, with Foreign Office approval, raised a police force, forty strong, of Kroomen, to be paid for out of the fines collected by the Native Court at Old Calabar. This force, lacking strong and regular discipline, quickly constituted itself an alternative source of authority to the chiefs, the merchant community dubbing it "the forty thieves". With these, and by inciting friendly chiefs to make war on those who defied consular rule, Annesley endeavoured to keep order.

To Annesley this situation was intolerable. There was no law, properly speaking, in the Protectorate; the missionaries preferred the Bible to the sword; the traders were complaining bitterly about the insecurity of trade; comey had not been collected; the resuscitation of the governing council had created more confusion than order, and even the policy of using natives to chastise natives came apart when Annesley's "forty thieves" were repulsed with heavy losses in an attempt to punish the people of Akwette, for alleged trade offences. The sooner the administration of the Oil Rivers was settled, the better.[1]

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1. F.O. 84/2020, Annesley to F.O. 21.5.90, 19.6.90, 13.8.90.

The action of the government however, was neither hasty nor certain. In April 1890 Macdonald anxiously inquired of Anderson whether Lord Salisbury would wish to see him with reference to his reports, only to be informed that he "had better take his three weeks run to Scotland first".[1] At the end of June he was still awaiting further instructions when Mockler Ferryman's leave ran out.[2] During August the Foreign Office obtained leave for Macdonald only to the end of June 1891, should his services be required for so long.[3] Only in October, after Macdonald returned from Berlin, was he officially informed of his appointment, and the practical planning of the administration could begin.[4]

For this planning, Macdonald drew on a number of sources. First and most important was his own report, and the material he had collected in the Oil Rivers. Secondly, there were the opinions of men who had had practical experience of the Rivers, traders, missionaries and the consuls, particularly Johnston and Annesley. Lastly, there were the views of the

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1. F.O. 84/2080, mins. by H.P.A. and Salisbury, 22.4.90.
2. F.O. 84/2019, Macdonald to F.O., 25.6.90.
3. ibid. F.O. to Macdonald, 25.8.90.
4. Macdonald's appointment dates from 1.1.91, his commission from 15.12.90.

Foreign and Colonial Office officials, particularly Lister and Anderson. At the planning stage Macdonald was given a remarkable freedom, usually only modifying his ideas in response to criticism better informed than his own. Rarely did the Foreign Office impose a direct veto on any aspect of the Commissioner's scheme, although it emerged much modified, particularly in response to Treasury pressure. The scheme was in essence his own.

Even Anderson, however, got a shock when he received Macdonald's basic scheme for the administration of the Oil Rivers on December 15th. The expenditure of £66,398 was more than twice what Anderson himself had estimated, and he thought it much too high. Macdonald was not in the least apologetic, maintaining that "if the thing is to be done it should be done well" - and "if the revenue is there why not spend it".[1] He proposed to spend it as follows:

High Commissioner's Dept.	£ 3234		
District Commissioners	4914		
Treasury	949		
Customs	3400		
Public Works	4475		
Marine	7405		
Medical	1800.	2.	6
Constabulary	11821	15.	0
Subsidies to native chiefs	6000		
Buildings	12500		
Steamers	6900		
Armament, ammunition etc.	3000		
	£66398.	17.	6

1. F.O. 84/2020. Macdonald to H.P.A., 19.12.90. P.

Of these amounts all except the last three were annual items.[1]

At the head of the administration was the High Commissioner, at a salary of £2500, with an office allowance of £250 and consular powers over the Cameroons. Under him were six District Commissioners at £600, with allowances of £100, to be stationed at Brass, New Calabar, Bonny, Opobo, Quo Ibo and Old Calabar. With the exception of the High Commissioner, the salaries were somewhat higher than for the equivalent posts in the other West African colonies. Macdonald advocated this on the grounds that the districts were larger than in the colonies, that, apart from the seaboard the area was completely unexplored, and the climate onerous, and lastly, that it was important to attract men of intelligence and culture.

The Treasury and Public Works departments he thought could be undertaken by the District Commissioners until the administration was more complete and the revenue secure; although he felt an early organisation of the latter under a Foreman of Works salaried at £400 desirable in view of the rapid deterioration of plant in the colonies. Similarly, the Medical Department could be kept going for the present by an annual payment of £100 to each of the doctors in the Rivers.

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1. F.O. 84/2019. Oil Rivers Administration Scheme, by Macdonald, 15.12.90. Where no other reference is given, source is this document.

The Customs were susceptible of no such solution, and for the protection of revenue had to be organised straight away. The Marine Department was the most important in the administration. Eventually a sea-going steamer would be a necessity. This, however, would cost from £12,000 to £18,000 to build, and £1,000 a year to run. For the present, therefore, the goverhment should have three armed steam launches at a cost of £2,000 each.

It was, however, on the constabulary that Macdonald focussed his greatest attention, and on which, like Goldie, he was able to bring his considerable military experience to bear. He argued that a force such as was maintained by the Company was none too large for the Oil Rivers. Even with the advantage given to them by the Niger, the Company was unable to mount anything in the nature of a major land expedition. It would be that much more difficult, he felt, to maintain order in the Oil Rivers, owing to the difficult nature of the hinterland. If it was only a question of policing the European settlements at the mouths of the Rivers, then 50 men would suffice,

> "but the policy of the future government of the territories should be to open up the Interior, a work which though undertaken with the utmost patience and forebearance will require an efficient force to carry it out with any hope of success."

As a start therefore a force of 300 men should be organised

under an Inspector General. These men would receive the same pay and conditions as their Niger Constabulary counterparts, and would be armed in a similar fashion. This would facilitate a future amalgamation of forces in the event of an emergency. The total cost of the force, allowing for the extra equipment needed to operate equally on land and river expeditions, worked out to little more per head than that of the Company Constabulary. Until this force was organised, 100 Hausas should be recruited with three officers. Fairly good fighting material, he thought, might be obtained from some of the tribes in the Rivers, but Krooboys were useless as soldiers. Therefore, until research could be done, recruits had to come from tribes whose qualities were known.

Macdonald concluded his estimate of establishment with a warning - too much cheeseparing and the position would be as bad as before. Annesley's suggestion that the President of the Governing Council could act as Collector of Customs, Harbourmaster, Postmaster, etc. would not do:

> "the disorganised and discreditable state of affairs which prevails in the Oil Rivers is largely due to the fact that one man has hitherto attempted to do an amount of work which would give ample occupation for twenty."

How was all this to be paid for? Despite his hard hitting, Macdonald was as aware as anybody that the Treasury were not going to spend £66,000 without the prospect of

adequate return. He had two alternative answers to this - the first to prove that the prospective revenue would stand such a loan, the second, to get what was possible out of the Treasury and meet the rest of the establishment as and when the revenue permitted.

In his arguments as to the prospective size of the revenue, Macdonald had the important backing of the Assistant Under Secretary, Lister. Lister had long argued the viability of the Oil Rivers as a colony, arguing that a 1s. duty on the liquor traffic alone would soon yield £130,000, which "is nearly double the expenditure of Lagos in 1888."[1] Macdonald was not prepared to be quite so sanguine, estimating an annual import of 2½ million gallons of spirits and proposing initially a duty of 6d., he calculated that this would yield £62,500. The extra revenue could be obtained by an import duty of 2d. per pound on tobacco. This would bring the total revenue to £78,500, excluding other possible sources of revenue such as duties on salt, gunpowder, guns and an export duty on palm-oil and kernels. There was more than ample to cover the £66,000 from the Treasury, at the lowest computation. Even this loan might not be necessary. Here Macdonald advanced his second line of argument. Initial expenses until the Protectorate was organised would be much lower. He had indicated in his analysis which departments

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1. F.O.C.P. 6011. Memo by T.V.L., 1.7.90.

needed organising first; the others might wait. Therefore £50,000 or even £30,000 would suffice at the beginning, and would leave a balance for current expenditure, until the customs revenue came in. The preliminary estimate for plant and government he put at £45,000.

Although Macdonald's estimate was high, Anderson was forced to admit the force of his contentions. Indeed, after consulting both Goldie and Mackinnon, he had actually suggested to Macdonald that at least £15,000 for steamers would be needed. While not denying that this would be the case, the Commissioner felt that initially the three government steamers at £6,000 total would suffice.[1] Lister, like Anderson, was disposed to allow Macdonald a free hand: "... his personal knowledge of the country, its features and resources, justify reliance on his calculations." On December 22nd, therefore, Macdonald's memorandum was transmitted to the Treasury, and the Lords Commissioners were formally apprised of the need to establish a strong consular administration in the Oil Rivers. Political considerations had ruled out any other solution, and they were required to advance £50,000,

> "on such terms as to interest and repayment as may seem to their lordships proper to adopt under the circumstances."

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1. F.O. 84/2119. O.R. Admin. scheme, 15.12.90.

A prompt decision was urged, since delay in organising the administration

> "would increasingly disturb the relations with traders and natives who are anxiously waiting a definitive settlement." 1

The Treasury refused to be rushed however. Informal consultations were held with the Colonial Office before Macdonald's memorandum was officially referred to them on January 6th.[2] Meade, writing privately to Heath,[3] on the 1st, had been severely critical (although it was difficult to follow his logic in arguing that the expenditure was underestimated while the estimate was excessive): there was

> "no provision for a Government or Court House - or Hospitals - Harbour Masters etc. and other necessaries - no provision for leave ... On the other hand the salaries are somewhat high ... The Estimate of Revenue seems to be a mere shot - It is furnished by the merchants who when they made it were most anxious to persuade Her Majesty's Government it would be ample ... I doubt the Estimate for the working of three steam launches being sufficient especially regarding coal ... There are many more services which will soon have to be provided for which I doubt the sufficiency of the revenue."

Although Macdonald "had got his head screwed on the right way", there was every reason "for proceeding very tentatively."[4]

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1. F.O. 84/2097. F.O. to Treasury, 22.12.90. Draft by Lister.
2. C.O. 147/82. Treasury to C.O. 6.1.91.
3. Under Secretary to the Board.
4. C.O. 147/82. Meade to Heath, 1.1.91. Private.

This was manna to the Treasury. Anderson, however, had not been idle in the interval, and realising the importance of Colonial Office support, had ordered Macdonald to go over and consult with Herbert. This resulted in a modification of Meade's jaundiced view in the official reply to the Treasury delivered on January 14th. Now, while suggesting modifications of detail, the Colonial Office felt that Macdonald's calculations, "based upon the best information procurable", might properly be accepted by the Treasury, and were so far more helpful as to offer the services of the Crown Agents to supply the material needs of the administration.[1] But the damage had been done. On January 26th the Treasury informed the Foreign Office that, although there was much to recommend the scheme, there were financial reasons for not undertaking it at once in the absence of some very urgent cause, and therefore would it be possible to postpone it?[2] In the circumstances there was no alternative but to pursue the second alternative, that is to get what was possible out of the Treasury and meet the rest of the establishment as and when the revenue permitted.

Accordingly, Anderson asked Macdonald to prepare an

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1. C.O. 147/82. C.O. to Treasury, 14.1.91.

2. F.O. 84/2155. Treasury to F.O., 26.1.91. The Treasury thought the area under discussion was on the East Coast of Africa.

alternative scheme, which he duly submitted on the 29th. It was a barebones proposal to scrap all hope of getting the plant from the Treasury and concentrate on personnel. The total to be asked from the Treasury was £8000, to be split as follows:

High Commissioner	£ 2500
Private Secretary	300
Deputy High Commissioner	700
Treasurer	700
2 native chiefs, £50 each	100
5 Directors of Customs	2500
5 Native Supervisors	500
5 Supervisors of Customs	375
Doctors' Expenses in the Various Rivers	325
	£ 8000

With this reorganised staff Macdonald proposed to have the headquarters at Old Calabar for the present, and to station a Director of Customs with two native assistants at Benin, Brass, Bonny, Opobo and Old Calabar. The Directors of Customs would have the rank of Vice Consul and have judicial powers similar to those at present possessed by the Consuls. The Treasury would constitute a separate department, although the Treasurer would in case of necessity act as Director of Customs or indeed fill any post he was called upon to fill. The High Commissioner and his deputy would have general charge of all the Rivers, but would take particular charge of any one River during the illness of its

Director of Customs. Macdonald demanded as a sine qua non for this scheme that the telegraph should be carried on from Bonny to Old Calabar. If this were accepted, the nature and amount of duties could be decided and a notification sent out to the Rivers that from such and such a date those duties would come into force. As part and parcel of this, all comey would be abolished, and subsidies to native chiefs be made a first charge on the revenue. The revenue, he added, would probably fall considerably short of the estimates, owing to the now inadequate provisions for collecting the customs duties, and the total lack of means for preventing smuggling.[1]

It was clear that Macdonald had drawn the obvious conclusions since his meticulous memorandum of December. There was little to be got out of the Imperial Treasury, and the embryonic administration would have to row its own boat. So be it: the important thing now was to get on with the job. Macdonald expressed his new sentiments privately to the sympathetic Anderson.

> "I do not know whether the Treasury will run to £8000 for the first year; unless we are quite out of it with regard to our revenue, we ought to be free of their help by then ... But I do not think we could possibly make the staff smaller without risk of complete failure."

Macdonald was equally adamant about the salaries.

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1. F.O. 84/2110. Macdonald to Anderson, 29.1.91.

> "I don't know whether my salary seems out of proportion to the others but I have latterly been enquiring with regard to my staff. I find that good men, I mean fellows who don't drink and are not utter idiots, won't take service on the coast unless they are financially cornered. Now as far as I am concerned this is not quite the case for, apart from other considerations, I could look forward to commanding my regiment in India in a few years which is £1500 a year and allowances so that if the Treasury wish to cut my salary I should, <u>with very great sorrow</u> be it said, have to leave my present agreeable and considerate masters and once more polish up the Highland Claymore. I know some excellent men in my service who have no faults but impecuniosity & have tried to entice them, but as they rightly say, in India we could get £500 a year and command white troops, so it is not worth our while." 1

It was the intervention of Lord Salisbury, who, being Prime Minister as well as Foreign Secretary, was in a unique position to put pressure on the Treasury, which proved decisive. On the strength of a private conversation with Goschen, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Salisbury produced a compromise proposal for submission to the Treasury. The latter would provide the salary of the Consul General at £2500, with an office allowance of £700, as a permanent charge on the estimates. Macdonald therefore lost his assistant but gained a higher effective rate of pay. Six deputy commissioners were to be appointed at £600 apiece plus office allowances of £100. This was to be a charge for

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1. F.O. 84/2110. Macdonald to Anderson, 30.1.91.

one year on Imperial Revenue. Macdonald's point about salaries was taken, and the original proposed rate of pay was restored. Lastly the Treasury were to put up a loan of £10,000 which would eventually be repaid to the Treasury out of the revenues of the Protectorate.[1] Goschen carped a little at first at this suggestion, offering instead a straight loan of £10,000 and suggesting that the government might borrow the rest from private enterprise - a proposal which Lister described as a "bad joke".[2] Eventually, however, his consent was obtained to Salisbury's proposal, subject to two modifications. The Commissioner's salary was to be a charge for three years only, instead of being permanent, and instead of separate provision being made for the salaries of the Deputy Commissioners £4,000 was to be added to loan of £10,000. The total of £14,000 was to bear interest at 3% and be repayable by annual instalments of not less than £2,000, commencing with the year 1893/4, "so as to give the Protectorate a fair start of two years". Realising that the limits of Treasury generosity had been reached, the Foreign Office agreed.[3] Macdonald was past the first obstacle.

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1. ibid. P.C. to H.P.A., 31.1.91 F.O. 84/2156, F.O. to Treasury, 5.2.91.

2. F.O. 84/2110. T.V.L. to H.P.A., no date.

3. F.O. 84/2157. Treasury to F.O. 20.2.91. F.O. to Treasury, 2.3.

While these long negotiations with the Treasury had been taking place, Macdonald had not been idle. There was the very real problem of interviewing and selecting people who were willing to go out to the West Coast. Few were attracted to an area of the coast which was notorious for its death rate, many felt that they could get the pay with superior conditions elsewhere. Moreover, service in the Oil Rivers did not count towards pension in the imperial service. On these terms Macdonald found it impossible to get officers on the Acting List of the Army, the usual source for obtaining seconded officers. Nevertheless, the War Office was not unhelpful, and when, rather surprisingly, two regular officers of the line volunteered, they were sanctioned without any query. These were Captain R. F. Synge of the Highland Light Infantry, the Commissioner's own regiment, and Captain H. L. Gallwey, East Lancashire Regiment. A third man, a distant cousin of the Commissioner in the Argyll and Bute Artillery Militia, Captain A. C. Burns Macdonald, was also given permission by the War Office to join the Oil Rivers service.[1]

Another source which Macdonald tapped with profit was the Colonial Office. Men with colonial experience in the

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1. F.O. 84/2158. F.O. to W.O. 10/3; 2159, W.O. to F.O. 22.3.91.

tropics were of obvious value. From the Colonial service was recruited the Director of Customs, Thomas Wall. Wall had started his career as acting clerk of police, British Sherbro, in 1870, rising to become acting Inspector General of Police, Sierra Leone, in 1879, where he also acted as collector of customs. In 1889 he was appointed supervisor of the Gold Coast customs, in which year he also became a District Commissioner. To change a post worth £350 for one worth £700 was no great hardship to Wall, particularly as he had for some reason been under a cloud at the Colonial Office. Major General Hammill, Macdonald's second recruit, also relieved the Colonial Office of a problem. He was a distinguished officer, whose "small" appointment as a District Officer at Paplo in Cyprus was "ridiculously" disproportionate to his merits, but for whom "nothing better" had hitherto turned up. His appointment relieved the Colonial Office of the necessity of pensioning him off, at the same time releasing his post for a young and "simpler" man.[1]

Three outsiders completed the establishment. Macdonald persuaded his impecunious brother-in-law to be, W. C. Cairns Armstrong, to join him. The second recruit was Roberts, an accountant with a bent for travel, whom Macdonald appointed

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1. C.O. 147/82. F.O. to C.O. 13.3. Mins. by R.L.A., E.F., W.A.B.H., R.M., 12/14.3.91.

as Treasurer. The other man was an altogether more interesting character. Ralph Moor was born in 1860 at Buntingford, Herts., the son of a surgeon, William Henry Moor. His father had been able to afford the services of a private tutor, and the sickly youth led a rather sheltered early existence. In 1880 his father pushed him into business as an apprentice in the tea trade, a job which Ralph detested. On the death of his father in October 1882, Moor threw up his job and entered the Royal Irish Constabulary. This act marked a complete break with the past. There were few tougher schools than the R.I.C. in the 1880's - an alien minority attempting to keep some sort of order amongst a hostile majority - but by a combination of hard work and undoubted talent Moor rose at an early age to be a district inspector. He resigned however on February 9th, 1891, to seek an outlet for his talents for organisation elsewhere.[1] This outlet took the form of an offer to the new Consul-General for the Oil Rivers to go out at his own expense, and use his experience to organise the constabulary. Macdonald was not more surprised than delighted.[2]

The problem of providing continuity in the administration

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1. Dictionary of National Biography: MOOR.
2. F.O.C.P. 6351, Macdonald to F.O. 22.5.91.

exercised the Commissioner very much, and he solved it by inventing a new type of officer called a Consular assistant. Unlike the old Consular agents, these were paid officers who would act for the Vice Consul in case of illness. Macdonald envisaged a greater flexibility in their use than this, however. The early holders of the office would have to be prepared to work in the constabulary, treasury, survey, customs, or any other department as and where the need arose. Gradually, as the administration developed, these gentlemen became a permanent feature of it. As a beginning, Macdonald engaged four young men, Steains, Harrison, Wilding and Quilter, to go out with the Vice Consuls at pay roughly equivalent to that of a Gold Coast District Commissioner (£350). Already the Commissioner was looking beyond the limits imposed by the Treasury.[1]

Pay and conditions were obviously vital factors to be considered for both sides in the matter of employment, and Macdonald forwarded to the Foreign Office his "Rules and Regulations for Leave of Absence and Pensions" on May 13th. These Regulations were identical to those in force in the Gold Coast and Lagos, apart from the fact that the minimum term of service to qualify for pension was lowered from seven years to six. This concession Macdonald justified on

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1. F.O.C.P. 6351. Macdonald to F.O., 12.6.91.

the grounds that the pioneers of the Administration would have harder work "and undergo more exposure than the officials who would succeed them".[1] Since the Treasury had sombrely informed the Foreign Office that they could not legally impose any liability on Imperial revenues for pensions, and that it would

> "rest with the authorities administering the Protectorate to make the requisite arrangements for securing the charge" [2]

they were hardly in any position to raise any objection to Macdonald's scheme. Anderson, beyond insisting on the importance of some form of provision, was not disposed to interfere with the details, and the scheme was approved within the fortnight. The only anomaly was Macdonald's own position. As he was to be paid for the first three years out of Imperial funds, he would have to conform to the regulations governing the Consular service.

The question of finance, of key importance to the success of the administration, had two main aspects - the managing of money and the raising of revenue. By April 22nd, the Treasury was pressing to know what arrangements had been made for accounting and auditing the revenues of the

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1. Ibid. Macdonald to F.O. 13.5.91.
2. F.O. 84/2159. Treasury to F.O., 12.3.91.

Protectorate, but it was not until May 9th that Macdonald forwarded his scheme. It had been drawn up with the assistance of Roberts, and bore the stamp of a Company accountant rather than a Treasury official. All financial and accounting operations in the Protectorate were to be under the supervision of the Treasurer, who was responsible to the Consul General for seeing that a proper system of accounts was kept at Old Calabar and the various Vice Consulates, and for the safe custody of all moneys received from them. An account for the Protectorate would be opened at the Bank of England, and audit would be undertaken by the Audit Office. Noticeably missing was all the paraphernalia connected with a Crown Colony Treasury, the multiplicity of clerks and papers and the overcentralisation which required two extra officials to check the work of one. The scheme was accepted without opposition.[1]

With regard to the raising of revenue, Macdonald got off to a good start by persuading the Treasury to hand over fines to the amount of £1,650 collected in the Oil Rivers under the previous consular regime.[2] But his main source of revenue was obviously going to be customs duties. In deciding

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1. F.O. 84/2111 Macdonald to F.O. 9.5.91. Mins. by H.P.A. and E.B.N. 9/12.5.91.

2. F.O. 84/2165 & 2161, F.O. to Treasury, 10.4.91 & 20.5.91. 84/2163, Treasury to F.O. 22.4.91.

on their nature and amount, Macdonald had to bear in mind three factors. First, he was bound by the agreement with Germany that revenue should not exceed expenditure. Secondly, he had to frame his duties with reference to the Brussels Act, even though the Act had not as yet been ratified. Lastly, in order to obviate smuggling, it would be as well that his duties should bear some relation to the tariffs of the neighbouring territories. Macdonald therefore produced the following for the approval of the Foreign Office (neighbouring territories show the comparison):[1]

Items	Lagos	Niger	Cameroons	O.R.P.
1)Wine,ale,porter beer, per 1 doz. old wine bottles	9d.	-	6d.	6d.
2)Brandy,gin,rum & all other spirits, by Sykes Hydrometer not exceeding proof, old wine gallon	6d gin,rum 1s.brandy	2s.	6d. below proof 1s. above	1s.below proof 1d. per above
3)Unmanufactured tobacco per 1b.	2d.	6d.	1d.	2d.
4)Gunpowder per 1b.	¼d.	-	1d.	3d.
5)Trade guns, known as Danes, each	2s.	-	1s.	1s.
6)Lead other than for building purposes	4% ad val. (all lead)	-	-	1d. per 1b.
7)Salt per ton	5s.	20s.	4s.	4s.

1. F.O. 84/2111. Macdonald to F.O. 4.5.91.

With regard to the duty on spirits, Macdonald felt that it would have been more desirable if a uniform duty could have been arrived at in all four administrations. This would have obviated many difficulties over smuggling. The question, he suggested, could perhaps be discussed with the implementation of the Brussels Act; meanwhile there was no point in waiting. It is interesting to note that Goldie at this period was of the same opinion, offering to lower the Company's duties to 1s. 6d. per gallon, or even 1s., provided the Lagos administration would raise theirs to a like amount.

The Commissioner justified the high tax on gunpowder on the grounds that it was desirable to check the high import of 1889/1890 into the Protectorate,[1] on account of the expense and risk incurred by storing such large quantities of dangerous material in the manner laid down in Article IX of the Brussels Act. Lister criticised this on the grounds that the high duty would only create smuggling, and would prevent Macdonald from having a knowledge of the amount consumed and from being able to control the trade with proper regulations. It would be much better, he contended, to make the duty the same as in the Cameroons, and induce Lagos to raise theirs. While Lister was no doubt right that gunpowder would be smuggled, it was a questionable assumption that the

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1. 3,579,520 lbs.

amount smuggled in would exceed the amount admitted legitimately under a lower duty.

One of the Commissioner's biggest worries was indeed the control of the arms traffic. To this end he had only reluctantly settled for the lower duty on trade guns (1s. instead of 2s. as in Lagos), believing that even these unrifled flintlocks were not to be despised in the hands of an enemy in ambush. Rifles were, of course, forbidden imports. Macdonald looked to the adequate enforcement of the Brussels Act to check the indiscriminate use of firearms. His duty on lead was framed with a similar aim in mind. Lead was imported chiefly to make bullets and slugs,[1] therefore it should be charged duty, lead brought in for building purposes should come in free. Lister thought the proposal unrealistic:

> "I don't see what is to prevent people from turning pipes and roofs into bullets. The result of the tax would probably be that all lead would come in free. A single duty of ½d. per lb. would be simpler to levy and more profitable."

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1. Macdonald was no alarmist. The high imports of both gunpowder and lead (over three times as much as at Lagos) pointed to an unusual ability on the part of the inhabitants to supply the needs of their own weaponry. Nana himself employed three armourers who could certainly repair weapons. In their first assault on Ebrohemi in 1894 the British abandoned a field piece which had broken down. In their final assault it was captured from Nana in working order. The making of slugs for unrifled pieces was certainly not as difficult. Macdonald did however reduce the duty on gunpowder to 2d. before he sailed.

It was, however, the 4s. per ton on salt that Lister thought most objectionable. He brushed aside Macdonald's arguments of parity with the Cameroons. Two or three shillings would be quite enough; it would be better to make it free. As to smuggling, this would continue anyway in the Lower Delta:

> "As the Niger Company impose the exorbitant rate of £1 per ton, no reasonable tax would be effective."

To all these criticisms Salisbury returned a flat no.[1] Macdonald was to run the show, therefore, "Let him have it his own way". In this, the first Foreign Office Protectorate over a 'backward' people,[2] Salisbury never failed to reiterate what was in the early years to be a consistent principle: having chosen the best man for the job there was to be no petty interference in the details of the administration on the part of the home officials. Macdonald was to be ridden with a loose rein, even looser than Johnston (the organiser of the second Foreign Office Protectorate in Central Africa), in that he was financially independent as Johnston was not.

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1. F.O. 84/2111, Macdonald to F.O., 4.5.91. Mins. by T.V.L., [illegible] & Salisbury, n.d.

2. Zanzibar was considered to be "civilised".

It was heartening to Macdonald to have his administrative policy approved so quickly and with so little opposition. Hereafter, after hanging fire for eighteen months, things moved fast. On May 14th Macdonald submitted an initial list of expenditure to be covered by advances from the Treasury payable on or before June 30th. As in everything else he had done, his attention to detail was meticulous. £2,450 was wanted for the purchase of customs hulks and consular buildings, and £150 for the passages of native clerks, these to be payable at Sierra Leone. At the Bank of England, £1,750 was required for outfit allowances and passages, another £350 for ledgers and stationery and a further £350 as a contingency fund.[1] On June 1st, an account was duly opened at the Bank of England in the name of the Protectorate.[2] Meanwhile Macdonald had paid a visit to the Post Office. The result was a proposal to establish Post Offices at the six Vice Consulates, the business to be handled by the Vice Consuls with clerical assistance.[3] He even found time to argue with the Post Office over the proposed postal charge of 6d. per ½ oz. for letters, as against 2½d. at Lagos and 4d.

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1. F.O. 84/2164. Macdonald to F.O., 14.5.91.
2. F.O. 84/2165. F.O. to Bank of England, 1.6.91.
3. F.O. 84/2111. Macdonald to F.O., 29.5.91.

for the Cameroons.[1] His energy was extraordinary; Anderson's faith in his capacity as an organiser was not misplaced.

If good organisation was vital to the success of the Protectorate, so too were the administrative and political dispositions, and Macdonald lavished no less careful attention on them. The first task for the government, however, was to define his powers. He had formally received his instructions on April 18th.[2] He was to be termed the Commissioner and Consul General, under whom would be Deputy Commissioners and Vice Consuls. They would all hold Consular commissions to enable them legally to perform acts "as to which powers are conferred on Consular officers by Acts of Parliament". Justice would be administered over Europeans and other non-natives by the provisions of the 1889 Order in Council. The district over which they were to exercise these powers was as defined in the proclamation of 1885, with the exception of those territories which were administered by the Royal Niger Company. With his neighbours and Her Majesty's naval officers, the Consul General was to endeavour to work in harmony and keep on friendly terms. With the Cameroons he was to co-operate in putting down smuggling, and

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1. ibid. Macdonald to F.O. 1.7.91.

2. F.O. 84/2110 F.O. to Macdonald 18.4.91.

he should endeavour to settle, by negotiation "whenever an opportunity may offer", the basis of a boundary agreement for submission to the British and German governments. He was to make himself master of the international obligations affecting his territory, the Berlin Act, the Anglo-German Agreements and the Brussels Acts.

In his relations with the natives, the Commissioner was to ascertain that the treaties were thoroughly understood and carried out by the Chiefs. He was to take steps to amend these treaties and make new ones, so as to open up the Protectorate and "gradually bring all the territories ... under a uniform system of administration". His object in all this was

> "by developing British trade, by promoting civilisation, by inducing the natives to relinquish inhuman and barbarous customs, and by gradually abolishing slavery, to pave the way for placing the territories over which Her Majesty's Protection is and may be extended directly under British rule".

Quite how he was to induce the natives to change their ways without "interfering unduly with tribal government" and whilst allowing the Chiefs to administer justice to their subjects was not certain. But in the event of misgovernment he was to insist on the Chiefs' judicial and administrative powers being delegated to himself, although he should be careful not to arouse discontent by too abrupt reform.

The government was in no doubt as to priorities. "The question of raising revenue", Macdonald was informed, "requires your immediate attention". Comey must be abolished and revenue organised on a regular basis. Compensation could be paid to the Chiefs out of the revenue. All other expenditure, including repayments to the Treasury, had also to be covered by Protectorate funds.

Lastly all his reports and proposals were to be addressed to the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs for sanction, and in his conduct he was to be guided by the General Consular Instructions issued to Her Majesty's officers. With this conclusion the unique nature of the new administration was revealed. Here was a flexible amalgam, intended to furnish a viable alternative to the Crown Colony method of ruling backward races.

There was one more problem to be tackled before the Commissioner could leave for the Rivers. How was the new administration to be introduced to the Chiefs of the Coast states? Here Macdonald justified all the trust which had been placed in his tact and judgement. The Consul General was not going to arrive unannounced in a gun-boat and arbitrarily declare his task of governing the country to the affronted dignity of the Chiefs. He proposed instead sending

out two of the Vice Consuls, Synge and D. Macdonald, on a special mission to the Protectorate to inform the Chiefs of the impending arrival of the Commissioner and Consul General, who, acting under the orders of Her Majesty's Government, would administer the government of the Rivers. To this end, and to pay for the expenses of the government, customs duties would be imposed in all the Rivers in the same manner as in adjacent countries. The Vice Consuls were then to read a proclamation imposing customs duties within the Protectorate as from August 10th, 1891, carefully abstaining from any discussion of its contents. This procedure was to be carried out in all the Rivers, and a copy of the proclamation was to be left posted in a conspicuous place. The Vice Consuls were enjoined to recall to the Chiefs that Queen's government was what they had requested in 1889, and state that the Commissioner was returning to redeem that promise. For this purpose a Vice Consul would be stationed in each of the main Rivers. On his arrival the Commissioner himself would convene a meeting in each of the Rivers, explain the nature of the new administration in detail, and endeavour to obtain in writing the consent of the Chiefs to this arrangement. Anderson thought this an excellent proposal. If the Vice Consuls left on the next boat on June 10th, they would arrive in the Rivers on July 2nd. This would allow a full

month's notice to be given of the imposition of duties,[1] but no time to import dutiable goods to any great extent. Therefore a proclamation should be drafted which, while it asserted the necessity to levy duties, did not claim a legal right to do so, pending the written assent of the Chiefs. In this way, the Liverpool traders would not have the opportunity to get in with their tricks and evade duties.[2]

Macdonald left Liverpool on July 1st, 1891. In barely two and a half months from receiving his instructions, he had organised his administration. The time had come to take it off the drawing board. He sailed with the good will of most of the community. The shipping interests expressed themselves "eminently satisfied" and were "encouraged by the interest the government is taking in this territory"; Jones of Elder Dempster thought Major Macdonald "a particularly suitable choice" to run the new administration.[3] The Aborigines Protection Society were pleased at government action "long overdue". Likewise the independent traders, who

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1. It is strange that the British Government ignored the Anglo-German agreement of 1885, which stipulated four months' notice. More surprisingly, Germany did not complain.

2. F.O. 84/2167. Mins. by Macdonald, H.P.A., 5.6. F.O.C.P. 6351, Macdonald to F.O., inc. proclamation and instructions to Synge.

3. F.O. 84/2167. Elder Dempster to F.O. 6.6.91. Anderson's comment: "This is a kind letter."

had long opposed any form of charter extension, were, even if apprehensive about the new duties, pleased that the government had at last made up its mind.[1] The one sour note was introduced by the African Association, which whined about having been misled by the Foreign Office, claiming that now their property was left without protection and their position was one of "great perplexity", causing them "serious losses".[2] Anderson thought its tone "disgraceful" in view of the fact that the "Chambers of Commerce, the shippers, and the new traders were united against the policy of the Association". Salisbury's memory was conveniently short however:

> "I think they should be asked by Mr. Whitley to indicate more precisely 'the limits' of whose duplicity they speak. Such an idea as giving them a charter never crossed my brain." 3

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1. F.O.C.P. 6351, passim, has correspondence of various bodies, all favourable to the new government.

2. F.O. 84/2172 Whitley M.P. to F.O. 10.8.91 Enc memorial by African Association.

3. Ibid. Mins. by H.P.A. & S. 14.8.91.

CHAPTER SIX

THE ADMINISTRATION

If the planning of the administration bore the stamp of the Commissioner's personality, still more did the execution of it. As long as the Protectorate was solvent, and as long as complaints at home and abroad were non-existent or trivial, the Foreign Office could not have cared less how the administration was run. Indeed, refuge was often taken behind a somewhat spurious doctrine of non-responsibility. Thus Hervey, the Chief Clerk, stated in January 1893 that

> "/we/ do not audit the accounts of the Oil Rivers Protectorate and I am not aware that we interfere with the administration of the Revenue".

Lister went still further, doubting

> "how far we have the power to sanction or disallow any charges he /Macdonald/ may think right to make on his Oil Rivers Revenue." 1

Discretion could hardly have been wider, and it is significant that a change in the official attitude only occurred when the Protectorate first ran into serious disturbances during 1894. But for three years the opinions and personal inclinations of the Consul General were central to the formu-

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1. F.O. 2/51. Macdonald to Rosebery, 10.1.93. Mins. by H.H., T.V.L. Macdonald was proposing to grant an annual allowance to the daughters of Governor Beecroft.

lation of policy within the Protectorate.

The spirit of his policy Macdonald summed up in a speech at a dinner given in his honour by the Africa Trade Section of the Liverpool Chamber of Commerce when on leave in 1892:

> "The nature of the natives, the climate, everything is against precipitate and hasty action. To advance slowly, leaving no bad or unfinished work behind, to gain the respect and liking of the natives, and only to use force when compelled as a last resource to do so, are the means which in my humble opinion lead to success in West Africa." 1

Commerce, Christianity and civilisation were to be achieved therefore as far as possible by consultation.

This evolutionary policy did not represent to the Commissioner any excuse for inaction or an acceptance of the existing situation. The task of the administration was one of pioneer development: of education in the processes of self-government until the area was fit for sound Crown Colony rule. Macdonald dismissed with contempt the idea that consultation meant abdication of responsibility by the central government or that the administration should interfere as little as possible in the affairs of the native states. The practices of human sacrifice and the killing of twins were native institutions which would require an "interference, more or less despotic, to put an end to".[2] Coercion was

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1. C.O. Nigerian Pamphlets, No.5. Proceedings at a banquet 2.11.92.

2. F.O. 84/2083. Memo. by Macdonald, 1.7.90.

however a last resort, a policy which the Commissioner enforced on his subordinates, and it was significant that the first major conflict in the Protectorate took place when Macdonald was away on leave.

The key to effective government was the push into the interior. Macdonald saw the present troubles of the Oil Rivers as stemming from a lack of willingness on the part of government to provide sufficient men and materials to enable the former consular officers to move away from the coast, to which they clung on the sufferance of the native chiefs. The prosperous future, he argued, could only be secured by developing the resources of the interior, which were, at present,

> "very inadequately utilised, and by improving the means of communication between it and the coast."

Eventually even the seat of government could be established in the interior.[1]

One of the prime requirements of Macdonald's policy was men. Of the original thirteen of the "little band of Pilgrim Fathers" as they called themselves,[2] who went out in 1891, four succumbed to the climate before the administration was well under way, while four others

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1. ibid.
2. Mockler Ferryman, Imperial Africa, p.287.

> "were discreet enough to abandon the job after the first year and return home to serener climes." 1

Recruiting, however, for a long time remained on a haphazard basis. When Macdonald left home for the Coast, he handed over the job of recruitment to an army colleague, Major Verner. The task during the next four years passed through various hands: Macdonald himself, Moor, and the various officers from time to time in charge at the London Agency. It was only in 1896, when the Crown Agents took over the business of the Protectorate, that an organised system of vetting and appointing officers was established. Macdonald's own contribution to the haphazard nature of recruitment was exemplified in his instructions to Verner.

> "You know the sort of man I ... want. Should be between 24 and 34 but of course we can stretch a point both ways, medically sound guaranteed not to liquor to excess otherwise a hole six feet by two will be their reward as sure as eggs is eggs. Should be able to shoot and rough it a bit though I don't hold to roughing it too much in this climate. Must have grit and be able to keep his temper and tongue to himself. Any ex-Army or Militia to have preference. 2

The bonhomie of the Commissioner was echoed by Sir Alfred Jephson, in charge of the London Agency from February 1894 to October 1895. One future District Commissioner,

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1. Galway, H.L., "Nigeria in the Nineties", Journ.Afr.Soc., XXIX, 1930.

2. Macdonald P.P. Macdonald to Verner, 31.7.91.

Douglas, a nephew of Sir Alfred, left his account of an interview at the Agency which could hardly be exceeded for its brevity:

> "Here you are, my boy ... here is a billet for you, if you like to take it. Sail next Saturday." 1

That on this basis there was some indifferent material sent out to the Coast went without saying. What was remarkable was that there were so many men who in due course rose to high office. Only two men out of the many chosen did Macdonald find totally unsatisfactory, Dunn, a Consular Agent, whose dismissal involved the Protectorate in a protracted lawsuit, and Captain Scaife, whose dismissal from the Protectorate force for brawling in 1895 was amicably settled on a payment of nine months' salary.

That Macdonald had so little trouble with his personnel, and that he made much out of seemingly indifferent material was a remarkable tribute to his conduct of human relationships. Gallwey later recalled that the Commissioner

> "was both Chief and Friend, a most lovable man and who was held in the greatest affection and esteem by all who had the good fortune and privilege to serve under him." 2

Lugard on his way to the coast in 1894 remarked that he "never knew a man so universally liked as he is by <u>everyone</u>".[3]

1. "Nemo", <u>Niger Memories</u>, Exeter 1927.
2. Galway, art. cit.
3. Lugard Diary Vol.4, Ed. Perham & Bull, p.66.

The source of Macdonald's popularity was not far to seek. In a Protectorate where all worked hard, none worked harder than the Consul General. His concern for his men's health caused him to bend the rules in their favour and he consistently defended himself against suggestions by officialdom at home that the salaries he paid were too high, the last occasion being as he was on the point of departing for China.[2] Macdonald's humanity to his staff was amply repaid by their loyalty. The task of driving a team composed of so many disparate elements was accomplished with the minimum of friction. Even such a delicate problem as the substitution of Moor for Wall, the senior Vice Consul, in the succession, was accomplished without any resignations, Wall contenting himself with a good-natured grumble and a rise in salary.[3] It was important for the Consul General to be able to trust his subordinates, in that, given the rudimentary communications in the Rivers, the Vice Consul was at the beginning often left to his own devices. He was expected to act as a Jack of all trades - postmaster, customs officer,

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1. F.O. 84/2111. Macdonald to Anderson, 17.12.91.

2. F.O. 2/99. Macdonald to Anderson, 25.2.96.

3. As Director General of Customs & P.M.G., Wall was restricted to Old Calabar, the political post of C.G. requiring greater mobility. Correspondence, 1895. F.O. 2/84.

local magistrate, treasury official, diplomatic agent - until the relevant departments were organised. It was not surprising therefore that the initial strain took a heavy toll of the personnel.

Macdonald arrived in the Rivers on July 28th, 1891, and began immediately to organise his political dispositions. A fresh round of meetings with the chiefs was held, and the Commissioner discovered that Synge and Captain Macdonald had done their work well. Most of the chiefs stated that they thoroughly understood the customs duties, consented to their imposition and would abide by them. The chiefs of Bonny wanted to be informed in advance of any proposed alterations in the tariff, and Nana of Benin, flourishing his own copy of the proclamation, informed the Commissioner that he would now be able to see that his European friends did not charge more than was laid down in the schedules. At Brass the temper was at first militant, the Chiefs refusing to agree to the duties until the Commissioner gave them a written promise to get back their markets for them from the Niger Company. With a mixture of firmness and conciliation, Macdonald secured their submission on a promise that he would take up their case.

It is not quite clear why the chiefs accepted the

imposition of the duties so easily.[1] Anene argues that the significance was lost on them, because the new duties were levied on imports and not on exports, with which the traders were mostly concerned.[2] This is hardly tenable in view of the fact that the duty raised the price of liquor, an important article of barter with the hinterland traders. More attractive were the subsidies given in place of the comey, at best a tax of uncertain amount. Most important of all, however, the duties indicated the fair price which should be charged by the European for his goods.

At the conclusion of each meeting the Commissioner introduced the Vice Consuls to the European traders and to the Chiefs in whose rivers the political posts were to be established. Gallwey and Synge were placed west of the Delta at Benin River and Warri; D. Macdonald, Hammill and Cairns Armstrong occupied the three central posts of Brass, Bonny and Opobo. The Commissioner himself looked after the interests of Old Calabar. The spare Vice Consul, Wall, in view of his official experience, was set to organise the customs department at headquarters. The consular assistants were distributed, and more were appointed, so that by March

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1. F.O. 84/2111. Macdonald to Salisbury, 1.9.91.
2. Anene, op.cit., p.137.

1892 each post had its own relief. The Vice Consuls were to be permanently resident in each of the Rivers, and in general their continual presence was welcomed by the Chiefs. Indeed the New Calabar Chiefs expressed great disappointment that they were not to have a "Queen's man" of their own; they considered themselves quite as important as Bonny, and were going to pay duties like the rest.[1] It was the duty of each Vice Consul "to make himself thoroughly acquainted" with his district, and with the

> "wants and wishes of Her Majesty's subjects, both white and coloured, and to carry out the provisions of the Protectorate Treaties which the Chiefs had made from time to time with Her Majesty; he was especially charged to encourage and foster lawful trade, though he himself was independent of it, and in no sense a trader, and generally to uphold justice, peace and civilisation throughout the Protectorate." 2

The mushroom growth of Consular Assistants worried Hill at the Foreign Office. In April 1892 he wrote to Macdonald intimating that out of the ten consular agents appointed, only one had been approved; and that it was "not desirable to multiply the number of Consular appointments indefinitely".[3] Macdonald, however, stoutly defended the appointments on the

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1. F.O. 84/2111. Macdonald to F.O., 8.8.91.
2. ibid. Macdonald to Salisbury, 1.9.91.
3. F.O. 84/2193. Hill to Macdonald, 7.4.92.

grounds that it was desirable, in view of the climate, to ensure continuity by always having a government official on the spot, and that the appointments, being probationary, did not need approval. The officers were simply subordinate officials in the employ of the government of the Oil Rivers.[1]

If Macdonald was aware of Hill's susceptibilities, he showed himself completely indifferent to them. 1893 saw the establishment of new out-stations at Sapele, Akwette and Degema, and a new principle of having three officers per consulate - one on leave, one travelling, and one holding a judicial warrant at the main post, to act under the Africa Order in Council of 1889.[2] In January 1895 Degema was raised to consulate rank,[3] and Sapele became the headquarters of the Benin River consulate. The system of the "three men in a boat" as Hill called it,[4] raised the number of political staff in 1894 to twenty-two out of a total personnel of 50 Europeans,[5] at a total cost to the Protectorate of between £11,000 and £12,000 per year.[6]

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1. F.O. 84/2194. Macdonald to Salisbury, 20.5.92.
2. F.O. 2/63. Jephson to F.O. 22.3.94.
3. F.O. 2/64. Macdonald to F.O., 27.11.94. 2/82, F.O. to Macdonald, 19.1.95.
4. F.O. 2/63. As above, n1. Min. by C.L.H.
5. ibid.
6. F.O.C.P. 6783. N.C.P. Agency to F.O., 4.7.95, & 2/84, Agency to F.O., 15.7.95.

Having laid down the principle that each Vice Consul should reside in his river, the immediate practical problem was where. The government owned no buildings in the Rivers apart from the residence at Old Calabar, about which Macdonald was scarcely polite. He described it as a dilapidated wooden house with a tin roof which leaked, with windows falling and surrounded by thick jungle up to the front door, - "a truly dismal abode".[1] Outside the Rivers was Johnston's former residence on Mandole Island, now under the German flag. In addition to this Hewett had prepared a site at the mouth of the Bonny River for £107, but, pending a decision on the administration, no building had been erected there.[2] Macdonald had been aware of the accommodation problem before he left England and had opened negotiations with the trading firms to rent or buy property in the Rivers. This was not easy. The prices asked by the African Association were exorbitant, and they were in any case unwilling to rent property. Miller Brother proved to be more willing to let a number of buildings and warehouses to the Commissioner at a reasonable rental. Miller Brother however

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1. Geog. Journ. Sept. 1914, also F.O. 84/2111, Macdonald to F.O. 8.8.91.

2. F.O.C.P. 6351. Memo. by Mr. Ball re. property, H.M.G., O.R.P.

had no property at Brass, and here Macdonald had to use the resources of a small firm outside the big combines, Messrs. Brotherton, who sold him a dwelling house, wharf and warehouses for £1110, some £1300 cheaper than the lowest African Association price.[1]

The renting of property was at best a short term solution, and so, after his arrival on the Coast, he began to put the question on a more satisfactory footing. At Old Calabar the consulate was in a worse state than even Macdonald had anticipated, but in twelve months the place had been completely rebuilt and a new roof put on. Two other buildings were erected at the same time at a cost of £1000, one for the Treasury and customs, the other as a Headquarters and mess house for the Constabulary. Fort Stuart was purchased in December 1892 from the African Association, as a bonded warehouse and offices for clerks, for £3000. The consulate buildings were situated on a hill about 100 feet above the level of the river, and on the river bank Macdonald began to construct a wharf.[2] This brought him into sharp conflict with the African Association, who claimed ownership of the beach. The dispute was not settled until January 1893, after threat

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1. F.O. 84/2111. Macdonald to F.O. 10.4.91.
2. F.O. 84/2194. Macdonald to Rosebery, 10.12.92.

of legal proceedings, when the Association agreed to be bought off for £100.[1]

At Opobo and Warri, the Commissioner approached the native chiefs direct for grants of land, and soon large and commodious buildings were being erected to serve as Consulate, Customs House, Court of Justice and prison. At Bonny, the government possessed the land prepared by Hewett. Since nothing had been done to it since 1887, it had nearly disappeared because of the action of the tide. The land was reclaimed by means of a breakwater, but the Commissioner still considered it fit only for stores and warehouses. To house the Consulate, a hulk, the "George Shotton", was purchased in August 1891 for just under £1800 and anchored off the European factories.

It was not until August 1892 that the government was able to acquire a house in the Benin River. Until then the Vice Consul had to rely on the hospitality of traders. The house when purchased had the advantage of a large storehouse, but cost some £200 to repair. Macdonald already had plans for moving the Consulate away from the unhealthy river mouth, and to this end he purchased a hulk for £3600 and towed it some seventy miles up river to Sapele.[2]

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1. F.O. 2/51. Macdonald to Rosebery, 4.1.93. Macdonald paid another £100 for the Association's rights to a similar beach at Opobo.

2. F.O. 84/2194. Macdonald to Rosebery, 10.12.92.

With so much water in the Protectorate, boats were obviously a vital part of the establishment. The marine account always remained one of the heaviest charges on the revenue.[1] From the previous regime Macdonald took over two six-oared gigs, and one of these was badly holed above the water line.[2] During the first year of the administration, Macdonald acquired twenty-two more rowing boats of assorted sizes for local use in each river. These were the real sinews of the administration, used for customs and postal work as well as for carrying orders and messages. The purchase of larger boats was a bigger problem. In the first place, for communication between rivers, each consulate would require a steam launch, which would obviously have to be bought in England. During his perambulation of the rivers in August 1891, Macdonald had renewed his acquaintance with Captain Boler. As the latter was due to go on leave, and moreover knew precisely what was required, the Commissioner asked him to oversee the purchase of the boats in England.[3]

In addition to the steam launches, boats capable of navigating the coastal waters were needed. The hire of the

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1. See Table 2.

2. F.O.C.P. 6351. Memo by Mr. Ball re. Property H.M.G., O.R.P., 20.5.91.

3. Macdonald P.P. Macdonald to Boler, 15.10.91; F.O. 84/2180, Min. by H.P.A., 10.12.

African Steamship Company's "Whydah", which the Commissioner had used in August, was scarcely a long term solution.[1] On August 24th, therefore, he wrote home, asking if the Admiralty could be approached to effect the purchase of a second-hand sea-going steam yacht for which he was prepared to pay £8,000 to £10,000.[2] He followed this with a request for three sternwheelers, for which he enclosed exacting specifications, and for which he was prepared to pay £6000 apiece.[3]

Boler served the Commissioner well. He inspected a number of sea-going yachts put forward by the Admiralty, and condemned them all as unsuitable. He advised Macdonald that it would be better to have a new boat built to specification in the long run.[4] Macdonald however took fright at the effect on the revenue of the cost of a new vessel and decided to try to manage without a yacht altogether,[5] and rely on the Admiralty for a periodic gunboat patrol.[6] It was scarcely a

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1. F.O. 84/2111, to F.O., 24.8.91.
2. F.O. 84/2111 Macdonald to F.O. 24.8.91.
3. F.O.C.P. 6351. Macdonald to F.O., 10.10.91.
4. F.O. 84/2180. Boler to F.O., 14.12.91.
5. F.O.C.P. 6351. Boler to F.O., 4.2.92.
6. ibid. F.O. to Admiralty, 9.12.92.

wise decision. His whim for economy lasted barely twelve months in the face of reality. In March 1893, faced with a mounting need, Macdonald was still undecided as to whether to buy or not. His compromise decision to charter the steam packet 'Evangeline' from Messrs. Atkey of Cowes at a cost of £1500 per year gave him the worst of both worlds.[1] The Evangeline was a small pleasure yacht of 134 tons, with no accommodation for troops, and a maximum accommodation for six passengers with a crew of twelve. Even Macdonald admitted she was too small and was "not well suited for a tropical climate".[2] Moreover, without an adequately large vessel, Macdonald was still in pawn to the Admiralty for his day to day needs. Reluctantly, the Commissioner decided that a vessel tailored to the needs of the Protectorate would have to be built. Accordingly an order was laid with Earles of Hull, through the London agency, for a suitable vessel to carry 250 troops.[3] By the time the vessel became operative as the steam-yacht 'Ivy' in September 1895, the cost had spiralled to £53,000 (Boler's estimate in 1891 had been £30,000). The 'Evangeline' in the two years of its hire had

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1. F.O. 2/51. Macdonald to Lister, 25.3.93; 2/50, F.O. to Macdonald, 2.5.93.

2. F.O. 2/63. Macdonald to Kimberley, 19.8.94.

3. ibid.

mulcted the Protectorate of over £5000 including running costs, and a claim by the owners for £1500[1] for repairs was submitted to arbitration early in 1896.[2] The whole transaction brought the Protectorate dangerously near deficit. Macdonald was forced to rely on a doubling of the spirit duties in November 1895 and a short-term bridging loan of £20,000 from the African Association to stay in the black. A suitably chastened Commissioner was busy explaining to the Foreign Office why they had not been informed of the decision to spend so much out of revenue in view of the fact that the Treasury might have had to be faced on a deficit.[3] The resignation of Jephson on October as a result of a rift between himself and Macdonald over the transaction provided a suitable occasion to bring the Protectorate under a firmer financial control.

With regard to the sternwheelers and launches, the outcome was happier. Boler had shot holes in the Admiralty building estimates and had recommended putting contracts out to private firms.[4] By the beginning of 1892, he had made contracts for a sternwheeler and five steam launches at a

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1. F.O. 83/1380. Exchequer of Audit to F.O. 15.7.95.
2. F.O. 83/1441. Crown Agents to F.O. 17.12.96.
3. F.O. 2/51. Mins. by C.L.H. & H.P.A., 2.11.95.
4. F.O. 84/2180. Boler to F.O., 15.12.91.

price some £3000 below Admiralty estimates. The work proceeded rapidly, and by June the boats were ready for shipping to the Rivers. The sternwheeler was named 'Beecroft'[1] and was fitted out with a six pounder quick-firer, and two three-barrelled Maxims. Each of the launches had a Maxim.

Expensive new equipment required much care and maintenance, but it was not until the appointment of Commander Dundas, R.N. (retired), as Marine Superintendent in June 1893, that the marine department really got under way. By July 1895 the Protectorate owned six steam launches, one steam pinnace and 61 other boats scattered among the consulates, of assorted shapes, varying from a large six-oared 38-foot mahogany gig to a flat-bottomed Maxim gun punt. Only Bonny and Sapele Consulate did not possess steam vessels at all. Pride of place went to the new steam vessel 'Ivy' delivered in September 1895. Expensive though she was, she was tailored to the needs of the Protectorate. At 337 tons, length 237 feet and breadth 34 feet, she was by far the largest boat in the Protectorate service. Her troop deck was capable of accommodating 100 men with deck space for 150 more. This could be expanded to accommodate 300 native troops. Equipped with a searchlight, a 28 foot steam cutter,

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1. The 'Beecroft' foundered in a tornado in the Cross River, early in 1895.

a seven pounder Armstrong, a six pounder quick firer breech loader, and Maxim guns, the 'Ivy' was the most formidable boat in the Delta, far more akin to a gunboat than anything the Niger Company possessed.

The marine department was a large employer of labour. Under the superintendent (salary £600) were four assistant superintendents, a beachmaster, and a number of engineers, quartermasters, boatswains etc. The European staff rose from nine at the end of 1894 to fifteen a year later. The native staff over the same period (cooks, carpenters, storekeepers, clerks, blacksmiths, engineers, firemen) rose from seven to forty-seven. In addition to these were some 360 men who made up the crews, mostly Kroo boys. These were paid 25s. per month, a rate similar to that at Lagos.

The main establishment of the marine department was at Old Calabar and consisted in 1895 of boat sheds, repairing slip and gridiron, with store houses and a machine shop. The problem at headquarters was shortage of space. The entire dockyard was crammed into 1000 square yards of Queen's beach on the left bank of the river, and plans were afoot to extend this when Macdonald left the Protectorate in 1895. Each one of the consulates by this time had its own slipway and boat house built either by labour provided by the chiefs

or by prison labour.[1]

The land arm of the Protectorate was the constabulary, or as it was originally known, the Oil Rivers Irregular Force. This was the completely new body which Moor had gone out to organise in May 1891, and it owed nothing to Annesley's soldiers and police. With the departure of the Consul in the spring of 1891 went what discipline this force had ever had, and complaints came in to Macdonald of

> "numerous acts of lawlessness and pillage ... assaulting the natives, beating them and breaking into their houses, interfering with their women, all of which they did saying they were the 'Consul's men' and could not be touched."

Macdonald quickly demonstrated that they could be touched by handing out summary sentences of hard labour and the cat to the worst offenders and making a clean sweep of the rest by disbanding the whole force.[2] It was a decision which went a long way towards developing mutual trust between the government and the chiefs.

The history of the new Protectorate force began with the loan for one year of ten trained men from the Gold Coast Constabulary as a nucleus and for training recruits.[3] The

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1. Sources for this account of the marine department: F.O. 2/63, Macdonald to Kimberley, 19.8.94; Report of the Marine Department of the N.C.P. 1895, Private; F.O. 83/1380, Exchequer & Audit Dept. to F.O. 15.7.95.

2. F.O. 84/2111. Macdonald to F.O. 8.8.91.

3. F.O.C.P. 6351. Macdonald to F.O., 10.9.91.

Gold Coast refused to allow recruiting within the colony, however, since their own forces were under-strength. Moor rejected the inhabitants of the Rivers as soldiers on the curious grounds that they were not "known to be fit to be trained", and, more reasonably, that it would be inadvisable to employ them anyway. At Lagos, however, he received every possible assistance from the government, and by the end of the first year had raised a force totalling 165, consisting of himself and a European adjutant, 10 native staff and 153 non-commissioned officers and men. About fifty of the men were Hausas, the rest Yoruba.

At first the men were housed in rebuilt native huts, but in 1893 a barracks sufficient for 300 men was built at Old Calabar. On a similar temporary basis the men were armed with Snider weapons, which Moor considered out of date and suitable for training only. He wanted Martini weapons with sword bayonets. A school for teaching the men English and a canteen were also established at Old Calabar.

To supplement the work of the soldiers, Moor raised a second body of men trained to the use of arms, who performed the duties of a military police, carried out the orders of the Consular Courts, arrested and escorted prisoners, and afforded armed protection to the Vice Consuls when required. These were the later notorious Court Messengers. They were

provided with a uniform of khaki and blue serge and armed with Snider rifles. The officer commanding the irregulars had overall responsibility for their internal economy, and for those stationed at Old Calabar, but at the other consulates they were under the immediate direction and control of the Vice Consuls. The force numbered 26 in December 1892.[1]

With the passing of ordinances providing for punishment by imprisonment for various offences, a new function was added to the task of the Court Messengers, and it became necessary to establish them on a more independent footing. An officer in charge of Prison discipline, Hill, was appointed, and prisons established at Old Calabar, Degema, and Sapele. Opobo, Bonny, Brass, Warri, Benin and Quo Ibo each had one room lock-ups. Staffing was provided by an expanded force of 77 Court Messengers, who continued to provide their old services alongside the new. In line with their more specialised functions, Court Messengers were possessed of better pay and conditions than men in the irregular force. In fact the best of the irregulars, or those who retired after a term, were generally drafted into the civilian force. A keeper of prison got £7.10s.0d per month, a private 1s.3d a day.

It was the Court Messengers' task to supervise the prisoners. Those having an aptitude for overseeing work were

1. F.O.C.P. 6351. Moor to Rosebery, 8.12.92. Inc. by Moor.

put in charge of gangs of half a dozen men employed either on hard labour, which included the making and repairing of roads, cleaning latrines, cutting bush and firewood and carrying water, or light labour such as cleaning the prison yard, whitewashing and drying earth for latrines. Fosbery, the Acting Vice Consul at New Calabar, estimated the value of the prisoners' labour at £150 for the year 1894/5, from the twenty or so prisoners held in the Degama prison - a substantial amount in terms of labourer's wages of 6d. per diem.[1]

The position of the Irregular Force was regularised by the passing of a Constabulary Ordinance in 1894. Macdonald regarded it as essential that the force in the Protectorate should be under proper military discipline and control. A full range of offences were provided for with their punishments (28-33), including that of desertion (33), but court martial was replaced by trial by the Commandant with assessors (37). In the event of war, the ordinance provided for the full application of the Army Act, 44 & 45 Victoria, whilst the emergency lasted (56). The civil nature of the ordinance did not touch the discipline of the new force; it figured prominently instead in its powers and duties. Thus,

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1. F.O. 2/84. Fosbery to Macdonald, in Macdonald to Salisbury. 25.7.95. The Prisons Department cost the Protectorate £1452 in 1894/5 and £2902 in 1895/6 - the increase resulted from the Brass troubles. Estimates, F.O. 83/1380, Exchequer Audit to F.O., 15.7.95.

every officer was a justice of the peace in the Protectorate, and every member of the force a constable (25). This gave them powers of arrest over civilians (26, 27) as well as making them amenable to the ordinary course of justice (41, 42) in the Consular Courts. Control of the force was vested firmly in the Commissioner. The Commandant was responsible to the Commissioner for the direction and general superintendence of the force (6).[1]

Armed with the Ordinance, Moor's little army was taken in hand by the new Commandant, Boisragon, appointed in March 1894.[2] The force was rapidly raised to a total of 450 non-commissioned officers and men, split into eight companies, with provision for further expansion. The European officers in July 1895 numbered 16, the Commandant receiving the same pay as a Vice Consul, and 15 Wing Officers with pay varying from £350 to £500. Native officers when appointed got 5s.0d a day, sergeant majors 3s.0d., sergeants 1s.6d., corporals 1s.3d., lance corporals 1s.1d. and privates 1s.0d. Enlistment was for three years in the first ihstance, but re-enlistment was permitted for a total period of eighteen years, when a gratuity was payable. The men's rations were

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1. F.O. 2/62. Constabulary Ordinance N.C.P.

2. The following account of the Protectorate force, except where stated, is taken from F.O. 83/1380, Exchequer Audit to F.O., 15.7.95, F.O. 2/65, Macdonald to Kimberley 19.8.94, Annual Report, 1895. Also personal information from Captain Jordan, 1968.

provided, except at the permanent stations where 3d per day subsistence allowance was paid. The force was equipped with the latest Martini-Henry carbine Mark 1, 1893, with matching sword bayonets; two Maxims; a battery of four 7-pounder R.M.L. light field guns, and a war rocket apparatus. Each recruit on enlistment went through a course in musketry and a refresher course each year.

Besides the main barracks at Old Calabar with its space for six companies, there were barracks of a similar pattern for one company at Sapele and Degema. Military posts were also established at Itu on the Cross, Ekanem Essien on the Akpayafe, and Uwet on the Old Calabar River, as part of the policy of hinterland penetration. Since February 1895, to soothe the susceptibilities of the Niger Company, a detachment had been stationed at Brass.

Not surprisingly, in view of his own interests, Macdonald was proud of his little force. Morale was high; sickness was little more than 1 per cent per annum; drunkenness was rare despite the close proximity of the native towns to the barracks; military offences of a serious nature were unknown; there were only two desertions after the passing of the Ordinance, and eight bad characters discharged; and the men's developing discipline and standards of gunnery paid dividends in steadiness under fire during 1894/5.

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From the beginning the Foreign Office had told the Commissioner that what he could have in terms of men, plant and armaments depended on the money he could raise. Since the success of the government depended on the size of the revenue, fiscal matters obtruded into all departments and were never far from the Commissioner's mind.

Owing to difficulties of communication within the Protectorate, which led to delay in the rendering of accounts, Macdonald decided in June 1893 to transfer the Protectorate Treasury to London and appoint a local Treasurer at Old Calabar, as in the other Vice Consulates. Such a transfer, he predicted, would result in the saving of several hundred pounds each year in salaries, and a more satisfactory system of obtaining and paying for supplies.[1] By April 1894 the transfer was complete. The new treasurer was Clive Bayley, late of the Audit Department, whose handsome salary of £500 indicated the importance Macdonald attached to his task.

The new Treasury system followed the Colonial Regulations, with some adaptation to the needs of the Protectorate, and included the preparation of yearly budgets and estimates for the approval of the Secretary of State. The main modification of the old system was that the classification and

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1. F.O. 2/51. Macdonald to Rosebery, 24.6.93.

rendition of the accounts for audit were carried out in London. This had the twin advantages of speed and consistency of classification through constant supervision by the same officer. More important to Macdonald a priceless burden of work was taken off the shoulders of his political officers. Much of the local checking work was thrown on to the shoulders of the Local Auditor, who submitted an independent report to the audit office. Audit cost the Protectorate about £850, half of which was the salary of the Local Auditor, Phelips, appointed by Ryan in 1894. The arrangement disposed of the biggest complaint of the Audit office, that hitherto they had had to accept the figures submitted by the Vice Consuls since there was no means of checking their revenue figures.[1] The effects of the new system were soon felt. In September 1894 on the return of Bayley from organising the system in the Protectorate, the accounts for 1892/3 were at last submitted. But the accounts for 1894/5 were only three months late.[2] Estimates took a little longer to organise. The first to be submitted, for the year 1895/6, did not arrive at the Foreign Office until the financial year was four months old. This was partly the fault of

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1. F.O.C.P. 6572. Exchequer & Audit Dept. to F.O., 22.9.94.
2. ibid., & 6873, N.C.P. Agency to F.O., 4.7.95.

the Foreign Office, whose instructions were not received in the Protectorate until December 1894.[1] The estimates for the following year duly arrived at the appointed time, on January 1st, 1896.[2]

The first two Treasurers of the Protectorate, Roberts and Bayley, served the Commissioner well. Between them they had produced through practical experience a system which defended the revenue at the same time as it was easy to operate, and had rendered collection efficient. Careful husbandry had produced by March 1894 a cumulative asset of over £59,000, an amount, in the event, more than sufficient to cover the deficit of the following year caused by trade depression and the injudicious purchase of the yacht 'Ivy'. If there ever was a threat of a financial crisis, it quickly passed with the resumption of a normal pattern of surplus in the following year.[3]

The debt to the Treasury was paid off in the summer of 1893. As the Treasury had revealed the full extent of its generosity by insisting that the loan of £14,000 should be

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1. F.O. 2/84. Jephson to F.O., 15.7.95. Moor to F.O., 11.8.95.

2. F.O. 2/100. Macdonald to F.O., 1.1.96.

3. See Table 1.

allowed to accrue interest at a quarterly compound rate of 3% (that is, considerably more than the original 3% per annum), this was an event greeted with great applause by both the Foreign Office and Macdonald, even if the interest was not yet paid.[1] Moreover the viability of the embryo colony was triumphantly vindicated. Rosebery's "O si sic omnes" on the provisional accounts to August 1892[2] adequately expressed the views of officialdom. As long as the Commissioner produced such stunning surpluses[3] there was really no reason to interfere in the administration.

Macdonald's capacity to keep out of financial trouble depended almost entirely on the revenue from customs, which always exceeded 92% of the total government income.[4] The Foreign Office recognised this, and it was with some relief that they heard that the Chiefs had accepted the proclamation

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1. F.O. 84/2193. F.O. to Macdonald, 25.3.92. 2194, Macdonald to Salisbury, 23.4.92. Lister's remark, "Shylock would hardly have done this" was equalled by Salisbury's characteristic comment "I wonder they do not require him /Macdonald/ to take half of it in old Blue Books".

2. F.O. 84/2194. Macdonald to Rosebery, 10.12.92.

3. See Table 1.

4. The rest of the revenue came from licenses, fees of court, postal revenue and petty cash. These sometimes amounted to little more than 2%, see Table 1. Included in the balance was some income from investments.

imposing duties.[1] The position was now at any rate legally clear. The fiction of delegation of powers by the Chiefs was maintained, although it was not until 1894 that the Customs Ordinance giving full effect to this consent was passed.

The customs department was organised by Thomas Wall, the oldest and most experienced official of the original pioneers. He was not the most popular man in the European community,[2] and for this reason Macdonald eased him tactfully from the succession, maintaining that the Customs Department (with the Post Office) was a full-time job. As a Director General of Customs, however, he excelled, bringing just the right amount of professional stiffening into the administration; he was given a freedom in the supervision of the customs which Macdonald allowed no other head of department. He was, for instance, allowed to engage as well as train his own personnel.

On his way out to the Coast in July 1891 Wall had broken

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1. F.O. 84/2111. Macdonald to F.O. 8.8. & 1.9.91 Mins. by H.P.A. What the F.O. would have done had the chiefs not concurred is not clear. Anderson was more concerned to forestall "intrigues on the part of discontented Liverpool traders". This was not entirely a matter of his imagination. Macdonald had reported that the African Association and others had been pouring in articles before the duties were leviable, doing "their best to starve" him. Nevertheless the receipts for August touched £11,000.
2. F.O. 84/2111. Macdonald to Anderson, 17.12.91.

his journey at Sierra Leone and Cape Coast to recruit staff, and consequently he did not arrive in the Protectorate until August 27th. The proclamation imposing duties had already been in force for nearly three weeks and Roberts had temporarily supervised collection, but there were a number of matters requiring adjustment. This was particularly the case at Brass and Warri. The difficulty of getting the Customs books and forms to those stations meant that there was no return of imports for the month of August at Warri. At Brass the imports for the month were all free goods. During September Wall made a lightning tour of all the stations to instruct the Vice Consuls in the method of checking the books and forms kept, and to install the native customs officers under their control.[1] Each Vice Consul was the local Director General of Customs, responsible for this part of his work to Wall, and was paid an acting allowance of £50. The nature of communications within the Protectorate demanded this measure of decentralisation. Only Wall, however, on consultation with the Commissioner, could dismiss a native customs officer.

Duties were payable half in cash and half in bills drawn in England, but latitude was given to the Vice Consul of the district to vary the proportions in order to meet the exigencies of the public service. Duties in the other West African

1. F.O. 84/2194. Macdonald to Salisbury, 9.4.92. Inc. by Wall.

colonies had to be paid in specie, and only the Commissioner's desire to reconcile the merchants to the new system made him willing to incur the inconvenience and expense of the bill system. The bills were collected by the Bank of England at charges ranging from 6d. to 5s.; they were sometimes lost, ran the risk of being protested, and always depreciated owing to loss of interest on the passage home. The total loss to the Protectorate Treasury varied between three and five thousand pounds a year.[1]

The problem of the shortage of specie nevertheless had to be faced. A number of the agents had not been supplied with sufficient by their employers to meet even half the duty, and it was necessary that the administration should be provided with coin to pay the wages of the native employees, which up to the middle of 1892 were mostly paid in powder, cloth, gin and brass rods.[2] Macdonald first tried purchasing silver from Lagos, but found their charge of 2½% prohibitive. The Master of the Mint in London proved a better proposition. He agreed to extend to the Oil Rivers the arrangement with the West African colonies, whereby, in consideration of being paid in gold in London, the Mint sent out new silver at par,

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1. F.O. 84/2194. Macdonald to F.O., 18.5.92.
2. ibid. Macdonald to F.O., 21.3.92.

charging themselves freight and insurance.[1] Soon Macdonald was transmitting regular orders to London, and by 1896 there was an estimated £60,000 in circulation in the Protectorate. Since the threepenny bit was the smallest silver coin, the brass rod at 2½d., the manilla at 1¼d, and copper wires at ⅛d. remained the standard small change in the Protectorate. There was no paper money.[2] Silver seems to have been readily accepted by the native traders, who showed however an unwillingness to accept gold, although according to Macdonald, they were well aware of the difference in value of the two metals.[3]

The budget of the Customs Department was a modest 3½% of the total revenue in 1895 and consisted almost entirely of salaries. Besides the Vice Consuls, Wall had under him one assistant collector, a chief clerk and 48 native staff, principally from Sierra Leone and the Gold Coast, employed at the out-stations. Their salaries ranged from £10 to £50.[4] The number of officers employed at the out-stations varied in accordance with the size and importance of the station and

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1. ibid.
2. C.O. 464/1. N.C.P. Blue Book, 1896/7.
3. F.O. 84/2194. Macdonald to F.O. 21.3.92.
4. F.O. 83/1380. Exchequer & Audit Dept. to F.O., 15.7.95.

the number of vessels entering the ports. Bonny, for instance, never had less than eight, New Calabar had seven, while Brass, Warri, Benin and Opobo never required more than four or five. In addition to the main stations, protective posts, employing two staff each, were organised on the German frontier on the east and at Sapele on the west,[1] and at Idu and Bakana[2] near the Niger Company's frontier on the eastern side of the Delta. The greatest number of staff was naturally employed at Old Calabar where all the out-station returns had to be incorporated for compilation of the annual statistics. At headquarters probationers were also trained by Wall for duties at the out-stations, in order to relieve the older officers who had completed their three-year contract.

The regulations proposed by Wall were given legal sanction in the Customs Ordinance of April 1894.[3] This ordinance represented in great measure the recognition of a fait accompli, since it was considered unwise to draw attention to the doubtful legality of the Protectorate's actions by untoward amendment of existing regulations.[4] Where,

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1. F.O. 2/63, Macdonald to Kimberley, 19.8.93. Report on Customs.

2. F.O. 84/2194. Moor to F.O. 12.10.92. Inc. by Casement. Both Macdonald and Wall were on leave.

3. F.O. 2/62. Customs Ordinance (adapted from Gold Coast Regulations).

4. F.O. 83/1244. F.O. to Gray 19.12.93.

however, it provided the administration with teeth, and with powers hitherto unexercised, was in the prevention and detection of smuggling. Up to then the Customs officers had had to rely on vigilance alone to prevent smuggling. This reliance took the form of stationing two outdoor officers on board all ships entering Protectorate ports, who remained there until the ship cleared outward bound and left the anchorage. Action against offenders was usually limited to seizing the offending goods, more rarely to prosecution on a general charge of obstructing the Vice Consul in the execution of his duty. The Ordinance provided specific penalties for smuggling of imprisonment for up to three months, a fine not exceeding £50, or both (sec. 144). In addition to the penalties laid down, the Commissioner was permitted to make

> "all needful regulations for the better carrying into effect the provisions of the Protectorate Customs Ordinance" (sec.27).

Under this clause extensive powers were conferred on the Customs officers of the Protectorate, permitting them free access to all parts of ships, coming within their jurisdiction, and which authorized them to search ships from "stem to stern".[1] On land surprise surveys were to be held periodically by officers in charge of districts upon the stores of

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1. F.O. 2/62. Customs Ordinance, 1894.

importers, and examination made of any packages that "may be selected by the officer in question". At least two surprise surveys were to be held per quarter and every factory visited once in six months. Periodic checks were to be made on the work of the native staff and a certificate sent in at the end of every quarter saying this had been done.[1] The Commissioner was determined to protect his revenue.

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Having laid the foundations of sound administration, Macdonald proceeded to build thereon. To this end, recruitment proceeded apace for the new departments he intended to organise - departments "for the spreading of civilisation", like the Post Office, Botanical, Medical, Sanitary, Intelligence and Public Works Departments.

At first the Post Office[2] was seen by Wall as an adjunct to the Customs Department, an officer being detailed at each station to undertake postal duties. This had weakened the customs staff, and with the passing of the Post Office Ordinance

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1. F.O. 2/84. Customs Report for 1895.

2. The following account of the P.O., except where stated, is based on F.O. 2/62, the P.O. Ordinance 1894, and on the Annual Reports for 1894 and 1895 in F.O. 2/63 and 2/83.

of 1894 it was decided to set the department up on an independent basis. Wall remained Postmaster General, with a total staff in 1895 of twenty, three each at Old and New Calabar, two at Bonny, and one each at Opobo, Warri, Forcados, Brass, Benin, Quo Ibo, and Sapele. There were in addition three itinerant postmen, an Assistant Postmaster (a European) and a Chief Clerk. The department was grossly under-staffed, the officers (Wall described them as "native coast Africans") performing the work of local postmasters, sorters and stamp-sellers, often single-handed. By force of circumstance the supervision of the Vice Consuls was often of a desultory nature. It was not surprising that visitors to the Rivers failed to be struck by the impressive institution of Her Majesty's Mails. One of these early visitors left a typical description of the Post Office at Forcados:

> "It was not an imposing edifice, - only a little square hut, built either of cotton wood logs or frame boarding ... I found the interior reeking with damp, and dimly lit by a highly odoriferous paraffin-lamp. The room contained little besides one or two vermilion-painted barrels ... and various kinds of creeping things; but there was moisture everywhere, standing in beads upon the match-board, trickling down the walls and filling the shadowy apartment with steamy discomfort."

This particular Post Office also did duty as some kind of hotel, where Europeans who wished to catch the boat home spent

an uncomfortable night in a trestle cot.[1]

If the Post Office was not impressive, it was at least effective. The local post from river to river, which was taken through the connecting creeks by means of boats and canoes, had a near hundred per cent success record, according to Wall, only one miscarriage of mail occurring in 1894/5 owing to the capsizing of a canoe; the mail was subsequently recovered, though damaged. To overcome the problem of capsizing canoes, the mail was carried in vermilion-painted barrels, with the letters V.R. painted in yellow across one end. Macdonald was more concerned with the cost of the service, which reduced the profit of the Post Office to vanishing point. He proposed therefore, in 1895, to suppress the use of canoes and to carry on the service by means of the 'Ivy', the saving in expenditure to go towards the upkeep of the yacht. His hopes of saving £1,000 a year on this account were over-sanguine. Small boats were still needed for the creeks and in the event the saving did not exceed £250 to the Postal service, which the yacht more than consumed in maintenance.[2]

Nearer headquarters the postal service was better

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1. Bindloss, op.cit., p.134.
2. C.O. 464/1. N.C.P. Blue Book, 1896/7.

organised. By 1895 pillar boxes had been erected at Creek Town, Duke Town and on the Mission and Consulate hills. Degema also had its red "pillar of the state".[1] A penny post was established in Duke Town with a daily collection and delivery.[2] Up to 1894 the Protectorate used imperial stamps with an overprint; in February however the General Post Office approved designs submitted for the administration's own stamps.[3] These stamps provided an unexpected bonus in revenue, for the administration was immediately besieged by requests from stamp collectors. Well over half the £3,000 raised from the sale of stamps and cards during 1894/5 came from this source, but the amount dropped dramatically the following year to £1,365, as stocks were accumulated by dealers.[4]

A reduction in the ocean postage to and from the United Kingdom in October 1891 from 6d. and 4d. to 2½d. per half-ounce, acted as a stimulus to general correspondence.[5] During

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1. Goldie H. Calabar & its Mission, p.351.
2. ibid.
3. F.O. 83/1309. P.O. to F.O., 22.2.94.
4. C.O. 464/1. N.C.P. Blue Book, 1896/7.
5. The reduction was a consequence of the admission of the Protectorate to the Postal Union.

1894/5 over 40,000 items (letters, postcards, newspapers, parcels) were transmitted, of which nearly 6,000 were registered. No pre-1891 figures exist, but obviously there were then no registered items. The number of bags interchanged with British and foreign countries amounted to 1,400 forwarded and 1,570 received. Old Calabar and Bonny together handled three-quarters of the mail.

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> "It is hardly necessary for me to dilate on the importance of maintaining the efficiency of a department which in this West African climate daily and hourly battles with disease and death." 1

Macdonald had witnessed too much disease in Egypt to underrate the importance of the medical and sanitary department in his new environment. Expenditure in this field rose from £5,308 in 1893 to £7,550 in 1895, a rise of nearly 40%, and the third highest growth rate after Marine and Customs. If such items as the upkeep of cemeteries and the building of drains and latrines, which came under the Public Works Department, were included, the expenditure on sanitary matters would be even higher.

The Medical Department consisted in 1895 of a Principal Medical Officer, Dr. Allman, who drew a salary of £1,000 per annum, an amount in no way inferior to that given for other

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1. F.O. 2/63. Macdonald to Kimberley, 19.8.94.

similar posts on the West Coast. Under him were fourteen district medical officers, fully qualified practitioners under the medical acts then in force in England, drawing between £350 and £500.[1] The rest of the European staff consisted of an analyst and three hospital nurses. The total of nineteen European staff was second only to the number of whites employed in the political department. The native staff consisted of a dispenser, with assistant, two hospital assistants, three hospital servants, one keeper of the smallpox hospital at Old Calabar, and a cook. Subordinate to the medical officers were the native sanitary officers and the seven sanitary inspectors.[2]

The Medical Officers were given sweeping powers. Allman and two of the senior D.M.O.'s were given judicial authority under the Africa Order in Council.[3] What this implied was laid down in the Medical and Sanitary Regulations of 1894.[4] These were passed as Queen's Regulations under Article 99 of the 1889 Order,[5] since Macdonald could not find any colonial

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1. The Medical Officers were also allowed to take private practice.

2. F.O. 2/84. Jephson to F.O., 15.7.95.

3. F.O. 2/63. Jephson to F.O., 22.3.94.

4. F.O. 2/62. Medical & Sanitary Regulations, April 1894.

5. P.C. 2/340. Art.99; Consul has power to make Queen's Regulations for "the peace, order and good government" etc .... and "for securing the observance of any Treaty".

ordinance suitable for adaptation. The Principal M.O. was given the supervision, direction and general superintendence of all D.M.O.'s and their subordinates, and of all prisons, hospitals and quarantine stations; and of all medical arrangements and sanitary duties in the Protectorate (56). He could suspend any subordinate below the rank of D.M.O., pending the decision of the Commissioner (57). He himself was only removable by the Commissioner (53). His powers of search were as sweeping as those of the Customs officers, for he could board any vessel within the Protectorate at any time he considered necessary for the discharge of his duty (58). That the D.M.O.'s were under the sole control of the Principal Medical Officer in all matters relating to the Medical and Sanitary Departments had the effect of excluding the influence of the Vice Consuls in these fields, and establishing a chain of hierarchy direct to the Commissioner (59).

Section 11 dealt with the provisions to be applied in the event of an outbreak of smallpox or other infectious or contagious disease. Wilful failure to report such an outbreak, or concealment thereof, was met with a fine of up to £10, or imprisonment for a maximum of fourteen days. On a case being reported, the District Officer was at once to give instructions for the isolation of the infected persons and

report the circumstances to the Vice Consul. Infected property was to be disinfected and whitewashed if permanent, or burnt if a native hut. Persons known to have been in contact with smallpox could be compulsorily vaccinated and quarantined in premises for up to forty-eight hours.

Section 12 dealt with the important question of the disposal of the dead. Every public burial ground was placed under the supervision of a D.M.O. who was to see that it was kept in a thorough state of repair. Burial was to take place within twenty-four hours of death, except in the case of disease, when it was to take place as soon as possible. Deaths were supposed to be reported within twelve hours to the D.M.O., although Macdonald was aware of the difficulties of enforcing this provision in the rudimentary state of the country's communications.

The Sanitary Inspectors, in addition to supervising burials and acting as executive officers of the M.O.'s, had extensive powers of search of all premises, to enable them to examine their sanitary condition. If dissatisfied with any premises, a report was made to the M.O. who himself made an inspection, and could order the owners to clean up the drains, privies and surroundings or other offensive matter within a specified time; failure to carry out these orders incurred a

maximum fine of £10 or imprisonment with hard labour (55, 13-17).

Sections 18 to 24, the last group of regulations, dealt with the powers of the M.O.'s at the ports. Their powers to search ships were the same as on land. If a vessel was infected with cholera, yellow fever or smallpox, etc., the master was supposed to signify the fact before dropping anchor. He was then visited by the M.O., who placed the vessel in quarantine until it was clear - and this was for the M.O. to decide. Any neglect, obstruction or concealment on the part of a master could lead to a fine of £100 or three months' imprisonment. When clear of any infection, a vessel was granted a bill of health at its first port of call, which was valid throughout the Protectorate, but had to be endorsed at each subsequent port of call. Pratique was not granted to any vessel whose papers were not in order and when granted did not exempt a vessel from complying with the sanitary regulations then in force.

These regulations have been quoted at length not only because they constituted the basis on which a vital section of the administration was built, but also because of their intrinsic importance in revealing the Commissioner's turn of mind. Macdonald had acquired an interest in hygiene, and a

heightened sense of its importance, after inspecting prisons in Egypt and serving on Hunter's mission, and this never left him. He was to carry his cleansing operations into China. His official reports on the Oil Rivers are a mine of information on sanitary operations - an extraordinary pre-occupation when he was at the same time so busy with his political correspondence. The powers he gave his M.O.'s and the "strictest orders about looking after their health"[1] which he gave his personnel, were all part of the same picture.

But Macdonald did not wait until 1894 before commencing his cleaning-up operations: neither was he backward in exhorting others, who quickly became infected with his enthusiasm. The first station to merit attention was Old Calabar. Here Macdonald described the European cemetery as a "blot on the Settlement".[2] This was cleared of undergrowth and scrub, walks made, and "a living fence, which was soon replaced by an iron railing",[3] placed around it. The ground was formally handed over by the Presbyterian Mission Society to the Sanitary Department, who apportioned out the ground and had a plan made. The necessity of doing this was revealed in a

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1. F.O. 84/2111. Macdonald to Anderson, 17.12.91.
2. F.O. 2/63. Macdonald to Kimberley, 19.8.94.
3. Goldie, Calabar and its Mission, p.351.

rather bizarre fashion when the Assistant Treasurer Wilding became the first victim of the new regime.[1] When his grave was dug, the ends of two coffins came into view.

The question of native burial was more difficult to deal with. The prevailing practice in Efik society was that all Chiefs and their wives, and any titled person, could claim burial in the houses where they lived, whereas the bodies of slaves, paupers and children were thrown into the bush or river. One of the favourite depositories was Consulate Hill where, in the clearing of the bush, numberless skulls and bones were found. A native cemetery was at once marked out on the lines of the European cemetery, and any Chief failing to bury the body of his servant or slave in the place apportioned to him was subject to a fine. That by 1894 there were little more than 150 graves in the cemetery indicated the Herculean task Macdonald had set himself. A second cemetery was however opened in June in Henshaw Town. With regard to the Chiefs, the Commissioner deemed it impossible to interfere with the ancient custom of domestic burial, although with much tact he persuaded them to report burials and allow the presence of a Sanitary Officer to see that the grave was the regulation six to ten feet deep.[2]

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1. F.O. 84/2111. Macdonald to F.O., 13.9.91.
2. F.O. 2/61. Macdonald to Kimberley, 19.8.94.

The situation of the native towns at Old Calabar, lying at the foot of the Consulate Hill, and in the immediate vicinity of the trading factories, rendered strict sanitary measures imperative. Public latrines were built, the bush encroaching on the town cleared, and regulations made for the daily cleansing of the streets which would have done credit to an English township of the period. Two of the native Sanitary Inspectors were employed as a mobile patrol unit, whose activities the Chiefs quickly came to comprehend. The tour de force was the construction of the marina, thus doing away with the foreshore, "the dustbin and latrine".[1] The quayside was carried out to low water level (six feet below high tide) and planted with trees. Sewage disposal was effected through open brick conduits emptying into the rivers - a crude but effective way of channelling pollution away from the towns. Many of the worst 'slum' dwellings were pulled down and new roads made with brick drains - these proved a heavy expense during the rainy season,[2] although the drainage was materially improved.

The government buildings were fortunate in their siting, well above the swamp level, on Consulate Hill. The hill was,

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1. F.O. 2/51. Macdonald to Rosebery, 12.1.93.
2. F.O. 2/84. Macdonald to Salisbury, 26.7.95.

however, very overgrown with scrub and bush, and this was cleared, leaving only a few of the larger trees. During 1893, accommodation was built for the medical staff and a European hospital erected. The latter, owing to delays in the arrival of materials, was not fully operative until July 1895. There was accommodation for six patients in single-bedded wards, and for six in a general ward. The United Presbyterian Mission volunteered to supply the nursing staff, if the government provided the doctor and the drugs. In addition to the European hospital, a large general native hospital and a dispensary were constructed during the course of 1895, at a cost of £1,686,[1] and smallpox hospitals were established at Duke, Creek and Henshaw Towns.[2]

At Opobo the native town was some distance from the factories and the Vice Consulate, which rendered continuous supervision of the sanitary regulations somewhat difficult. Macdonald insisted, however, that the European community should govern itself in a sanitary fashion, and to this end the swamp near the Vice Consulate was filled in and storage tanks installed to provide a pure water supply. During 1894 a smallpox hospital was erected, and a native burial ground

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1. F.O. 83/1380. Exchequer & Audit to F.O., 15.7.95.
2. F.O. 2/85. Macdonald to Salisbury.

laid out.

When the administration was inaugurated, Bonny had one of the worst reputations for dirt on the Coast. The problem was attacked with vigour. The bush and undergrowth between the river and the town was cut away. A greater part of the town was condemned, and the Chiefs ordered to pull down the huts overhanging the streets. River latrines were erected and a smallpox hospital established. A combined native and European cemetery was laid out, surrounded by an iron fence 400 yards long. The town's water supply was improved by the construction of a brick embankment round the rainwater reservoir, which allowed the people to draw water without wading in it, and by the digging of new wells. The close proximity of the European factories to the native town involved the former very much in the success of the new regulations, and with much grumbling the agents were ordered to clean their factories. There were no hospital facilities for Europeans at Bonny as such, but as a temporary measure the hulk 'George Shotton', on the completion of the new Consular buildings at Degema, was towed to Breaker Island in the mouth of the Bonny River to act as a sanatorium. The towns of New Calabar, like Bonny, suffered from a surfeit of scrub and bush which took some time to clear, but there the Chiefs

showed more willingness and themselves undertook the replanning of the wards with wider streets, good drainage, and public latrines.

The Delta stations of Warri, Brass and Benin River suffered somewhat from shortage of money and the subordination of social to political considerations, with the close proximity of the Niger Company's territories. Thus, although two wells were sunk at Twon to improve the water supply, and latrines were erected, these fell into disrepair when the town became depopulated during the Brass troubles. At Warri the European settlement was said to be reasonably sanitary after the bush had been cleared, but nothing was done to the native town, beyond the burning of an infected village about a quarter of a mile behind the European settlement. The development of the Benin area was temporarily halted by the campaign against Nana, whose town of Ebrohemi Gallwey described as

> "always kept most scrupulously clean, and is, in its way, quite a model native town." 1

In the absence of statistics before 1895 it is difficult to assess the impact of the sanitary and health policy of the administration. Money was obviously a limiting factor, as was the climate itself. Disease continued to remain a major

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1. F.O. 2/63. Macdonald to Rosebery 12.1.93 Enc.

problem. The European weakness was malaria. Outbreaks of smallpox occurred at every station during 1894, although nowhere did it reach epidemic proportions. Guinea worm was prevalent among the natives at Brass, nephritis at Warri, diarrhoea and beri beri at Sapele. If there was still a long way to go, clearly some improvement was made after December 1890, when three-quarters of the European population died in one epidemic. During the outbreaks of smallpox in 1894/5 there were only four recorded deaths from the disease, although 168 cases were dealt with in Old Calabar alone. That a major contributing factor was the vaccination of all coloured employees of the government and of the commercial houses by the end of 1894 could not be gainsaid.[1]

At first sight a Botanical Department seemed a strange luxury to include in a pioneer administration. Macdonald, however, thought it vital that he should find ways and means of promoting the economic development of the country through its actual products; in particular, it was necessary to wean the Protectorate away from its complete dependence on the success or failure of the palm oil trade. In an endeavour to achieve this Macdonald, in February 1893, appointed Horace Billington, late of the Royal Gardens at Kew, as Curator of a

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1. F.O. 2/84. Macdonald to Salisbury 25.7.95.

botanic garden to be established at Old Calabar.[1]

From the start, the project was a success. In seven months a piece of ground twelve acres in extent had been cleared by a small army of Kroos some seven hundred yards from the Consulate General, and over 200 varieties of plants were growing. By July 1895 the garden had expanded to 46 acres and 300 varieties, and Billington was granted a European assistant. The Curator was painstaking in his attempts to reproduce Kew at Old Calabar. The garden was laid out with paths, bordered with grass, and ornamental plants; in the centre lay the Curator's house with attached potting and tool sheds. Along the roads connecting the Consulate with the gardens avenues of mango trees were laid.

The main object was of course to propagate economic plants. Two of the most successful were coffee and cocoa. About 22 acres of the gardens were occupied by the 2100 coffee trees which were mostly raised from seeds in April 1893 and planted out in August 1894. After only twenty seven months, the trees averaged over six feet in height and had seeded. Bulk orders for seeds were immediately laid, and by the middle of 1896 100,000 plants had been produced. These were given out as free gifts to the chiefs, who, in return for

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1. F.O. 2/63. Macdonald to Kimberley Enc by Billington 19.8.94.

clearing the ground and planting them, were given a small subsidy by the administration for each plant alive and healthy at the end of the third year. When the plant began to bear fruit at the end of the fourth year, it became the property of the planter and began to pay for itself. A similar system on a smaller scale was worked with cocoa. On Macdonald's instructions, Billington drew up a pamphlet which was translated into Efik and distributed free to the growers, giving useful rules and hints respecting the growing of coffee and cocoa. Encouragement was given to protect and care for the existing trees growing wild in the Protectorate, and instruction given on the best methods of collecting the beans. The results were spectacular. The export of coffee jumped from 2,798 lbs. in 1893 to 28,099 lbs. in 1894. Cocoa rose from 21,760 lbs. to 51,299 lbs. in the same period.[1]

The rest of the gardens were split equally between a large orchard containing 500 tropical fruit trees (orange, lime, banana, avocado pear, papaw and pineapple, of which the pineapple did particularly well) and the main garden containing a variety of plants from embryo mahogany trees, and sisal hemp plants to attractive ornamentals. Arrow-root, Kola-nut, Ficus Elastica and Ceara Rubber, Amatto dye, Henna, cinnamon,

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1. F.O. 2/84. Macdonald to Salisbury 25.7.95 Inc. by Billington 22.7.95.

capsicums, castor oil, coconuts, all the tropical fruits, log-wood and various medicinal plants such as digitalis were amongst the varieties giving the best economic yields. Rice also did well in the swamp below the consulate. The least successful plants were the black pepper, the grape vine, and the ginger which only gave a small yield with much attention. As might have been expected, English vegetables and grasses generally did not thrive. Moderate yields were gleaned of cucumbers, turnips, carrots, dwarf beans, radishes, mustard and cress, vegetable marrow and endive. Tomatoes grew to a large size, but would not ripen well. Peas, potatoes, lettuce, cabbage and onions would not grow at all.

Apart from the nature of his experiments the greatest problems Billington had to face were the periodic tornadoes and the seasonal nature of the rainfall. There was not much he could do about the former but the latter he solved by means of water storage tanks let into the ground. This enabled him to water by hand during the Harmattan period. (December/January), and again during the dry season (April/May). Soil erosion and replenishment were met by the conservation of the larger trees already existing in the garden, and by the sedulous cultivation of humus from dying plants and leaves.[1]

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1. Annual Reports 1894 and 5. F.O. 2/63 and F.O. 2/84.

The Surveyor General's department might more fairly have been termed the odd job section of the administration, since everything which could not be fitted into a neat pigeon hole ended up there. The Surveyor General, Ross, was paid a salary of £500, under him was another of Macdonald's countrymen McAllister as assistant, and a travelling officer responsible for intelligence, Casement. Casement retired from the Protectorate in 1895 and his post was not filled up. Up till then he had performed useful service in exploring the hinterland of the Cross River, an area never before visited by a European. This was part of an ambitious project Macdonald had in mind for constructing a map of the whole Protectorate. The present surveys he had quickly found to be "useless on account of their incorrectness",[1] but when Casement retired little had been done towards the realisation of the project.

Under the Surveyor General came the vast Public Works department. This consisted in 1895 of four European carpenters who acted as foreman/supervisors and a large army of Kroo boys. The Kroo labourers were paid fifteen shillings a year plus their passages, clothing and keep. In 1893 the public works budget amounted to 29% of the total expenditure,

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1. F.O. 84/2194. Macdonald to Rosebery 21.12.92.

the biggest single item. Thereafter it dropped in 1894 to 20% and 1895 to 7%.[1] The drop was largely due to a decrease in extraordinary expenditure consequent upon the administration's initial requirements for plant being fulfilled. The expenditure under the head 'public works' does not tell the complete story, however. Costs were concealed under the heading 'transport' which, apart from the passages to and from England for personnel, consisted almostly exclusively of heavy freight costs incurred by the department; and 'Krooboys' - the labour force constituting some 50% of this heading. In 1893, therefore, the expenditure on public works was more like 40% of the total. In 1895 the transport and Krooboy costs also fell radically along with the public works - the Krooboys less since a sizeable labour force was still needed for maintenance purposes.

It was the task of the public works department to look after existing Government property, to submit plans and specifications for future needs, to acquire the materials and then to execute those needs. It had to work in close conjunction not only with the Commissioner and Consul Generals department, but also with the Vice Consuls and the Medical Department. The amounts of government property varied from river to river.

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1. See Table 2.

New Calabar, for instance, had a hospital, barracks, latrines, fowl house, machine shed, strong room (prison),covered wells, a custom house and a further office at Idu. Brass, very much the "poorest of the rivers", only possessed a consular building, a court house, and a warehouse.[1] Nevertheless, even where the establishment was small, the cost and amount of work connected with upkeep remained heavy for this small and understaffed department.

The activities of all departments were collated and coherence given to the administration by the London Agency. Macdonald had early recognised the necessity of having a representative in London for recruiting purposes, for the ordering of supplies, and for the payment of accounts, salaries etc. It was not until February 1894, however, that permanent arrangements were made and Macdonald appointed Captain Sir Alfred Jephson R.N. (retired) to be the first (and as it turned out the last) full time Agent General of the Niger Coast Protectorate. Jephson had no administrative, executive or judicial duties to perform but was in full charge of supply, keeping records, correspondence and the selection of staff.[2]

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1. F.O. 2/84. Jephson to Foreign Office 15.7.95.
2. F.O. 2/63. Macdonald to Foreign Office 19.2.94.

His salary was £500 and to assist him he had a chief clerk, an assistant and a messenger. Provision was made in a total budget of little more than £1,000 for extra clerical assistance, as well as running expenses.[1] Bayley's office was also in the agency, and in the absence of Jephson, he took charge of the general business as well as his own.

The judicial functions of the administration devolved on the Vice Consuls, who were the mainsprings of the political department. The Consular officers exercised power in the Oil Rivers under the provisions of the Africa Order in Council of 1889. Under article seven provision was made for the power of constituting altering or abolishing local jurisdictions for the purposes of this Order

> "with reference to the whole or any part of parts of any of the districts or territories for the time being included in Her Majesty's Protectorate of the Niger districts." 2

The net was flung wide in so far as the government had not yet at this time made up its mind between consul, company and colony.

As so often in the early years, law lagged behind practice and it was not until 1893 that the Oil Rivers were

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1. F.O. 2/84. Jephson to Foreign Office 15.7.95.
2. P.C. 2/340. Africa Order in Council 1889.

formally erected into a local jurisdiction. The definition of the local jurisdiction bristled with difficulties. The government's failure to resolve the dispute over boundaries between the two portions of the Protectorate resulted in the somewhat negative pronouncement that the new entity consisted of that

> "Portion of the Protectorate under the administration of H.M.'s commissioner and Consul General. This would now form a separate protectorate under the name of Niger Coast Protectorate." 1

The lack of geographical definition in Davidson's eyes meant that the notice "conveyed nothing whatever to the public" and was bound to lead to future disputes as to whether a particular offence was or was not committed within Macdonald's sphere of jurisdiction. Furthermore he contended,

> "we must know over what territories we are proclaiming this Protectorate assuming we are to proclaim it at all."

A protectorate within a protectorate was "extremely awkward" and the notice was "a mess from a legal point of view".[2] Davidson's protests were ignored. Indeed Rosebery with unwonted levity seemed to be more interested in the name of the new administration

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1. London Gazette 13.5.93.

2. F.O. 2/50. Min. by W.E.D. 1.3.93.

> "Oleomargarine or Codliveria would be preferable to a designation that suggests greasy floods oozing out to sea." 1

Niger Coast was adopted after Goldie had protested that "Niger Provinces", the alternative suggested, might be held to apply to Sokoto and Gwandu. The Proclamation of 1893 did nothing beyond indicating the obvious - an effective British administration was functioning in the Niger Delta.

The powers conferred by the order within the local jurisdiction were held under Article X to extend to British subjects and their property, personal and proprietary rights and obligations; foreigners who submitted themselves to a consular court; and foreigners

> "with respect to whom any state, King, Chief or Government whose subjects, or under whose protection they are has by any Treaty ... or otherwise agreed with Her Majesty for, or consented to the exercise of power or authority by Her Majesty." 2

This part of the order was given statutory force by the enactment of the Foreign Jurisdiction Act in the following year. This act allowed the Crown to enjoy as full jurisdiction over foreign countries acquired by "treaty, capitulation, sufferance and other lawful means" as by "cession or conquest",[3] and

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1. F.O. 2/51. Macdonald to Rosebery 21.4.93. Min. by R.

2. P.C. 2/340. Africa O. in C. 1889 Art.X 'Foreigner' meaning any person whether a native or subject of Africa or not, who is not a British subject.

3. 53 & 54 Vict Cap 37 Preamble & Art 1.

practically annihilated the distinction between a Protectorate and a colony. Moreover by defining jurisdiction to include exercise of power (act XVI), the act enabled the crown to advance from consular jurisdiction to the full power of legislation within the protectorate.[1] After the chiefs in the Oil Rivers had ceded their powers by treaty there was therefore no logical stopping place until full colonial rule was reached. The procedure in legislation for Protectorates was defined in article 15 (adaptation of Colonial ordinances) and article 99 (passing of Queen's Regulations). It may be added that there was nothing exceptional in the Order or the Act. Germany had since 1887 claimed similar powers in her own African Protectorates.

Macdonald, therefore, was provided with extremely wide if ill defined powers. The term by which he was called was in itself significant of the new order of things provided by the act. To have borne the title Consul alone as Hewett and his predecessors had done would have implied a renunciation of the district as a British possession, for a consul could only properly be appointed to a foreign state; he could not levy taxes; nor could he exercise any well defined authority over

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1. Madden A. Imperial & Constitutional Documents p.90. See also F.O. 97/562 Memo. by Halsbury 28.3.90.

natives and foreigners. This would have opened the way to German or French intrigues.[1] Macdonald's consular functions, practically only extended to the Cameroons and Fernando Po. Within the Oil Rivers he was Commissioner - a term which had executive connotations,[2] and was sufficiently vague to obviate the difficulties attached to a position of well defined rank and limited powers. For convenience, however, the courts of the Oil Rivers were termed consular courts - consuls having a proper judicial rank by which the fiction of a protectorate in the Oil Rivers could be maintained. But the double rank covered all contingencies, and was extended logically enough in their commissions to Macdonald's subordinates, who became Deputy Commissioners and Vice Consuls. As no particular geographical area within the local jurisdiction was assigned to these officers, Macdonald could switch them around between rivers in any way he liked.

Consular Courts were quickly established at Old Calabar, Opobo, Bonny, Warri, Benin and Brass, with appeal to the Consul General's court. That at Brass ceased to function after D. Macdonald's resignation in 1894,but a new one appeared at Degema. These courts exercised under the African Order effec-

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1. F.O.C.P. 6011. Memo by T.V.L. 1.7.90.

2. F.O. 83/1241. Gray to F.O. 11.7.93.

tive powers over all who came within their territorial jurisdiction, the Consul General's court exercising in addition extra territorial jurisdiction. Appeals to the Old Calabar Court were rare - there were none in 1894-5.[1]

The cost of administration of justice was difficult to gauge accurately, since the burden was split between a number of departments, but it was obviously heavy. The Court messengers alone cost over £2,000 in 1895, additional clerks and interpreters another £750.[2] As a set off against this, the Treasury allowed Macdonald to keep the fees and fines which would normally have gone into the Imperial Treasury. But these, though they increased from £260.9s. in 1893[3] to nearly £2,000[4] for 1895, never covered the costs.

The new native courts at Old Calabar revealed the spectacular increase in the government's authority since 1891. Native courts were not new in the sense of being without precedent. The precedent lay in the old Courts of Equity succeeded by Johnston's Governing Councils. A native council

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1. F.O. 2/84. Macdonald to F.O. 12.7.85.
2. F.O. 2/84. Jephson to F.O. 15.7.95. The Clerk of the Consul General's Court was paid £120 p.a.
3. F.O. 83/1240. Treasury to F.O. 18.5.93.
4. F.O. 2/84. Jephson to F.O. 15.7.95.

of Old Calabar was instituted by Johnston and included European traders as well as Chiefs. It had a chequered career, being declared illegal by Hewett, but was reconstituted by Annesley. When Macdonald arrived in 1891, it had not sat for more than a year. Like the other remnants of authority in the rivers, it was effectively swept aside, and a new start was made.

The new ~~organism of~~ organisation of Old Calabar was known as the High Court of the Native Councils of Old Calabar. Its President was ex officio the senior Consular authority (the Commissioner himself, when not on leave). It had a Vice President elected for three months by the 37 members (all the important chiefs of Old Calabar) and he acted for the Commissioner in his absence. The important fact to note here is the removal of both the white trader and white missionary elements. The court was held every Thursday at 11.00 a.m. in the Court House of the Consulate General and there was nearly always an average attendance of three-quarters of the members, the quorum being five. Regular and punctual attendance was enjoined and a fine of up to £5 was imposed on any member not putting in at least four attendances per quarter.

The powers of the High Court were limited to the carrying out of Consular orders and the hearing of civil

actions and criminal charges wherein natives or native interests alone were concerned. The verdicts of the Court were to go by a majority of votes, the Vice President having a casting vote. The maximum penalties which could be inflicted by the Court were £100 fine, thirty lashes, or twelve months imprisonment with hard labour, although these penalties could be increased with the Commissioner's consent.

The situation respecting appeals was interesting. The High Court was a Court of Appeal for the Minor Courts of Duke Town, Creek Town, Henshaw Town and Cobham Town, but for any minor court outside of these the court of appeal was the consular court. On the other hand any Efik of any minor court could elect to be tried primarily in the High Court. Obviously Macdonald hoped that the Efik people would develop sufficient sense of unity to enable the appellate jurisdiction of the High Court to be extended to all Efik minor courts. Appeals from the decisions of the High Court were made to the Consular Court at Old Calabar.

The minor courts were governed by similar regulations. They met twice a month with a quorum of three. Their powers were limited to the carrying out of Consular orders, the preservation of peace, the maintenance of highways and means

of communications "or any similar improvements tending to benefit the community at large", and the hearing in court of any ordinary palavers and criminal charges. In criminal cases they could not inflict a fine of more than £25, corporal punishment above thirty lashes or imprisonment for more than six months except with the sanction of the Vice Consul. Appeals had to be made to Old Calabar within a fortnight of sentence. The senior member of the Court was to take the chair in the consular officer's absence (which was nearly always). The members of the Court were left in no doubt as to their own responsibilities for exercising jurisdiction. They were warned that any concealment of twin murder, or the killing of innocent people, would render them liable to be punished as accessories and that anyone found guilty of taking such life would probably incur a capital sentence. The customs which came under the Commissioners' disapproval were human sacrifice, the killing of people for witchcraft, the administering of the bean or sasswood, the killing of twins, and the banishment of their mothers, trial by ordeal and the

> "compelling of widows to remain in their houses in filth and wretchedness after the death of their husbands until the funeral obsequies are over"

(future mourning was to be limited to one month).[1]

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1. F.O. 2/84. Macdonald to Salisbury 12.7.95.

By the time Macdonald had left the Protectorate minor courts had been set up on the Akpayafe at Tom Shots, Ekpa, Uwet, Okoyong, Adiabo and at Itu. One factor mitigating against the speedy expansion of the system was the shortage of white officers. Often non-government officials were used. Okoyong was unique in having a white woman as president - Mary Slessor. Outside the Cross River basin, however, the Consular courts continued to handle all the cases which came before them. Offenders who were not dealt with by the village community, without the cognizance of the British, were sent to be tried by the consular courts, usually consisting of the Vice Consul, or judicial officer as sole judge. A revealing account of the justice administered by the overworked Vice Consuls was written by a shrewd if prejudiced observer of Major Crawford's methods at Warri.

> "A big Yoruba sentry stood on guard beneath the verandah and when he informed us "This be justice palaver day, sah; Consul live inside," we entered the courtroom.
>
> The great square hall was partly darkened by green lattices, and every foot of space was occupied by a perspiring oily crowd. They were all big river men, splendid specimens of animal physique ... All were either accusers or prisoners taken red handed by the Yoruba patrol, or sent down by the bush headmen to be tried according to the justice of the white men. Behind a big desk at one end of the room a stalwart soldierly Englishman of middle age, whose face was wrinkled with lines of thought and anxiety, and probably suffering too, leaned wearily back in a chair,

> two big Yoruba soldiers with rifles in their hands standing like ebony statues beside him ...
>
> A big negro, charged with stealing his neighbours wives and afterwards shooting the injured man in the back with a flintlock gun ... stood sullenly erect, scowling at his judge, while a black interpreter translated the testimony of a native witness into fantastic English ... The witness was evidently lying boldly but unsystematically for he contradicted his own assertions himself, a second heathen who had apparently learned a little English from the Krooboys, informed the court that "This man be, sah - all one low bush tief", ere he proceeded to locate the occurrence in quite another place. Then the harassed official whose duty it was to try to sift the one grain of truth from such a tissue of falsehood, had them both arrested and adjourned the case. There were other charges of slave stealing, attempts to murder, firing on trade canoes, adulteration of palm kernels with shells and the like, to be investigated; ... and so is order maintained and justice done." [1]

The majesty and dignity of British rule were apparent if not its effectiveness.

There is little doubt that if Macdonald had remained longer as Commissioner he would have extended the system of native courts and consuls inaugurated at Old Calabar throughout the Protectorate and so relieved his own officers of some of their burdens. By 1896 there were certainly rudimentary "native councils" functioning at Benin, Bonny, Warri and Degema but these hardly exercised distinct judicial functions.[2]

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1. Bindloss op.cit., pp.145-7.
2. Southern Nigeria Govt. Gazette No.8 30.3.1905, pp.192-5. This gives a full list of the early native courts, but nothing of their judicial functions. I have not found any other reference which gives any elucidation of the term 'native' council at this period. The amount expended on them by the Protectorate Government in 1894-5 was only £124 as compared with the £2272 which went in subsidies to Chiefs.

The standard way in which a British official enunciated his policy to the natives was still by means of the palaver or meeting of chiefs. These were summoned as and when necessary and had no constitutional basis. It was left to Moor to channel the Vice Consuls' initiatives and formalize the process of establishing native courts.

The question of the legality of the native courts was never settled before the area was transferred to the Colonial Office. Macdonald was "unaware whether these native Courts are illegal", but convinced his superiors of their efficacy as a

> "very excellent and useful means towards doing away with barbarous and oppressive customs, and enabling the people of the country, over which we have assumed the responsibility of protection, to pursue their avocations, whether of trade or agriculture, in peace and security." [1]

As long as this was the case it was agreed, the point might stand over[2] since it was hardly worth worrying about.

It is claimed by Anene that these courts and councils "were the beginnings of what came to be called 'indirect rule'."[3] This is, perhaps, an oversimplification. In the first place no effort was made to establish these courts along traditional lines in their respective areas. The example of Old Calabar is the prime case in point. Its President was Euro-

1. F.O. 2/84. Macdonald to Salisbury 12.7.95.
2. F.O. 2/84. Min. by H.P.A. 17.9.95.
3. Anene op.cit. p.146.

pean, its procedure with the written summons was European, its mode of punishment was European. Even the law it administered had become most un-african with its attack on funeral customs, treatment of widows and twin mothers, leaving aside the more obvious attacks which Macdonald was committed to on such things as human sacrifice. Secondly Macdonald's mind personally revolted at the thought of a widow spending several years mourning her dead husband, but he could hardly maintain that the abolition of this custom was essential to the progress of British rule. But it was essential he felt to the progress of British civilization and would require interference "more or less despotic"[1] to put an end to. Herein lay the key to his policy. In essence it was one of direct rule. Thus the native courts were not to be a separate inferior parallel stream of authority with the consular courts. They were inferior it is true, but only in the judicial sense that appeal lay to the Consular Court. They were part of an integrated system of administration of justice - theoretically there was a direct line from the native of Old Calabar to the Commissioner in his own court. The task of promoting civilization was to proceed along western lines towards the eventual government of Africans by themselves. This was, indeed, "the work of humanity."[2]

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1. 84/2083. Memo by Macdonald 1.7.90.

2. Anene op.cit., p.252.

CHAPTER SEVEN

COMMERCE

Life and death in the Oil Rivers revolved around the oil palm, the staple export of West Africa, whose oil was used in soap, margarine and as a lubricant. Despite Macdonald's efforts to diversify the economy, little impact had been made on the dominant position of this product in the market.[1] The fruit of the oil palm was in appearance something between a pineapple and a gigantic fir cone "with the interstices filled in"; and this outer cover contained many "nuts", each resembling "a yellow plum". The skin of these nuts was "soft and silky, tinted gamboge and vermilion" and beneath it lay a mass of fibre and yellow grease. Inside this lay an inner shell "something like a walnut",[2] which was cracked to reveal the two or three black kernels. The whole fruit was pulped, then boiled, and the grease which floated to the top was skimmed off and shipped as palm oil, which fetched from £15 to £25 per ton according to the market. Two-thirds of the palm oil produced in the Rivers went to the United Kingdom, another quarter to France. The kernels were

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1. See Table 5.

2. Bindloss, op.cit., pp.151-152.

shipped as they were to Europe, one half to Germany, a third to the United Kingdom (although the proportion taken by the latter was rising), to be pressed for the inferior oil used in margarine. Kernels fetched from £9 to £15 per ton.

Trade was conducted along distinct channels. The markets lay in the interior, up to 150 miles from the Coast in the Eastern Delta. To these markets went the middleman traders to bring down the produce gathered by such peoples as the Urhobo and Ibo to the European factories. The trading scene at Warri, described by two visitors in 1896, might have been anywhere in the Delta.

> "We entered the receiving shed of the factory (sic) and here two young white clerks presided over a big tub measure into which the river men poured bushel after bushel of greasy palm kernels, or threw down calabashes of odoriferous yellow oil beside it. All of the latter were carefully probed lest the wily savage should have filled the lower half with clods. The place was full of steam and the sickening odours of oil and rubber, while the awful clammy heat checked the perspiration and made breathing a work of difficulty. One day of this kind has occasionally killed a stout full-blooded man. These two youths had stood there since six o'clock that morning, and they would be busy until darkness closed down ... When each black trader had seen his oil and kernels duly measured, he received a brass tally as a voucher for the amount and ... next proceeded to the storeshed or 'shop'. The shop was crowded with gorgeously and wonderfully attired negroes who were only prevented from looting the place whole-sale by the high counter. Flinging down their tallies any way, and at once, some received an order on the gin shed for so many cases, while others caught up all the cloth they could lay hands upon, or, vaulting over the counter, seized

> whatever article took their fancy, regardless of value. All were shouting at the same time, fighting for first place, or wrenching a coveted article from a neighbour's grasp, while the harassed agent and his assistant did what they could to prevent the unsophisticated savage seizing twice as much as he was entitled to get. The place was stiflingly hot, beads of moisture ran down the wainscoted walls, and the ceiling sweated globules upon our heads. The atmosphere must have been almost as bad as the Black Hole of Calcutta and yet the two white men worked there twelve hours most days." 1

Not surprisingly, as one trader remarked to Macdonald, changes were "lightsome in this malarial climate".[2] Funerals were common, often mixing the pathetic with the grotesque when, after a trader, probably himself suffering from fever, had read the last office, the coffin with its poor remains of humanity wasted to skeleton lightness was lowered into the mire and refused to sink.[3]

Imports into the rivers were diffused by the same channels as exports, working in reverse. It was from imports that the government derived its revenue. Two aspects of the import trade aroused controversy - the liquor trade and that in firearms.

That liquor represented a staple commodity for barter when the administration was set up in 1891 was undeniable,

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1. Blackwood's Magazine, April 1898. Anon., "Life and Death in the Niger Delta", p.455.

2. F.O. 84/2111. Macdonald to Anderson, 17.12.91.

3. Bindloss, loc cit. & Blackwood's, loc.cit.

although a proper perspective must be maintained. The customs figures for the first years of the administration were revealing in this respect. Imports of all alcohols, including the relatively innocuous ale, beer and porter, were far below the import of cotton goods, and never at any time exceeded 20% of the total import in value.[1] Since the Protectorate always had a favourable trade balance, the percentage represented by alcohol was something under 9% - a figure which hardly indicated the flooding of the Protectorate with alcohol to the exclusion of "legitimate" trade. A distortion of emphasis was produced by the administration's heavy reliance on drink for its revenue. Three of the four chief imports into the Protectorate were not taxed, drink was, and by 1895 represented more than 75% of the revenue derived from customs. The only other significant money-spinners were tobacco and, far behind, gunpowder. It would have been unrealistic of the Commissioner not to tax the liquor trade, indeed under the Brussels Act he was bound to;[2] at the same time, the dependence on it for his revenue brought him under heavy attack from its opponents.

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1. See Table 4.

2. The conference of the powers at Brussels in 1890 agreed, inter alia, that spirit drinking "n'excite pas ou ne s'est pas developpé" and that elsewhere it should be heavily taxed within the Free Zone of Africa. Text in F.O. 84/2011.

These opponents were a powerful lobby in British politics, consisting of teetotallers, missionaries, politicians, administrators and influential people from all walks of life, who combined a wide range of views from crankiness, prejudice and hypocrisy to noble humanitarianism. Inside Parliament, the attack came from the Liberal back bench, "the non-conformist conscience", and the radical left. Even before the administration was established, Sir George Campbell wanted to know if the government was going to continue to permit the traffic on the West Coast of Africa, and if there was any foundation for the complaint of the Niger Company that, while they levied heavy duties on drink, in the Oil Rivers the importation was free or much more lightly taxed. The government however refused to be drawn into anticipating the Brussels Act or into the sententious argument provided for Campbell's benefit by Goldie. The anti-liquor lobby were hardly likely to be satisfied by an assurance that duties would be levied for the future.[1] The running was taken up during 1893 by Dilke, who switched the point of emphasis to the reliance of the Oil Rivers administration on gin and German rum for their revenue. Ammunition was presented to the agitation by the sudden rise in palm oil prices during 1893, with a consequent increase of some 25% in the import of

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1. F.O. 84/2171. Question asked in Commons, 16.7.91.

liquor into the Protectorate.[1] The agitation was sufficiently strong to prompt the government into doubling the duty from 1s. to 2s. during 1895,[2] when, the price of palm oil having fallen, the import of spirits did likewise. In general, however, the government provided an effective barrier between the administration and its critics in Parliament.

If the parliamentary campaign consisted of a few well-aimed salvoes, without much ability to cut through the government's stone-walling tactics, the liquor question outside parliament took on a different appearance. Here the issue was not so much based on the whys and wherefores of the Protectorate revenue but on the moral and degrading effects on the native races. Here The Times of March 9th, 1895 wrote in typical vein:

> "There is no doubt left in the minds of intelligent, experience and practical men, that the supply of intoxicating liquor to the native races is equivalent to the demoralisation and degradation of the races concerned ... It is not a temperance fad nor a mere philanthropic counsel of perfection. It is the sober decision of unromantic men of business from one of Africa to the other, that an essential preliminary to successful administration is to prevent the sale or supply of spirits to the natives."

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1. F.O. 83/1244. Questions by Dilke, 8.12.93; 83/1382, 13.8.95.

2. F.O. 2/86, F.O. to Moor, 14.10.95 Guns were raised from 1s. to 2s.6d., gunpowder from 2d. to 6d. per lb. Lagos raised its spirit duties at the same time as part of a general move to bring the whole of the West Coast into line. Correspondence to be found in F.O. 2/84, 2/86, 83/1383, 83/1384.

Ranged behind the Times were the Niger Company, the Manchester Guardian and most of the mission societies. To co-ordinate policy, the Native Races and Liquor Traffic United Committee had been formed in 1887 under the Presidency of the Duke of Westminster and the Chairmanship of the Bishop of London, with such members, in 1893, as Goldie, Dilke, Lugard, Sir J. Kennaway M.P., Campbell, Baylis of the C.M.S., and Fox Bourne, secretary of the Aborigines Protection Society.

Opposed to the anti-liquor groups were, of course, the Liverpool traders. They had early protested against the "exorbitant" nature of the liquor duty, calculated to bring in some £200,000, a sum altogether out of proportion to the total trade. It was neither just nor politic, the official organ of the Chamber of Commerce argued,

> "for a Government to attempt to disorganise the whole trade of such a large and populous district as the Oil Rivers in order to pander to the whims and fads of professional agitators and old women, who know nothing whatever of the conditions of the people over whom they profess to shed so many tears."

The whole trade had been built up on the principle of free importation,

> "and the sudden rise in value of 100% on what is practically the currency of the land will have much the same effect as a reduction in the value of a sovereign from 20/- to 10/- would have in this country." 1

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1. Liverpool Journal of Commerce, 21.8.91.

In the face of so much controversy, both Foreign Office and Macdonald had endeavoured to pursue a via media. It was recognised in the Foreign Office that most of the revenue would come from gin, but, as Anderson remarked, "we need not proclaim this".[1] The agitators on both sides were played off against one another. Thus the Liverpool traders were told that

> "the public are more likely to think that our spirit duties are not high enough than to sympathise ..." 2

In face of the stronger anti-liquor lobby, the approach was more subtle. The necessity of a revenue was pleaded; if absolute prohibition was impossible the next best thing was to tax the trade, and anyway there were worse evils to be eradicated first, like human sacrifice. If the arguments employed by the government in this respect were questionable, in respect of trade they were not. There was no evidence to suggest that liquor had an adverse effect on trade.[3] Indeed, the import of liquor was itself dictated by the export trade in palm oil. This suffered badly during the slump of 1894, and so consequently did the liquor traffic and the administration's revenue.[4]

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1. F.O. 84/2111. Min. by H.P.A., 5.10.91.
2. F.O. 84/2172. Min. by H.P.A., 25.8.91.
3. See Table I.
4. For government arguments and stonewalling tactics, see F.O. 83/1382. Question asked by Dilke, 30.8.93 and attached correspondence.

Macdonald's attitude was realistic. He personally disapproved of the drink traffic, regarding it as a "pernicious import", and he discouraged the government employees in the Protectorate from partaking in excessive alcohol. On the other hand, he felt that there was little evidence of drunkenness in the Protectorate, the problem being worse in England. There were worse evils in the Protectorate, such as cannibalism, human sacrifice, and the traffic in slaves. To endeavour to make head against these a strong administration was necessary. If a revenue could be raised from another source all well and good, if not the natives should be educated towards abolition slowly, "for that was the proper way of setting to work."[1]

Macdonald's evolutionary approach came under a continual series of attacks from both sides. The motives of these attacks were rarely pure and their facts were usually misplaced. The Protectorate neither gained from the import of liquor nor did it suffer from an alleged flood of cheap gin. It was the Commissioner's task to steer between Scylla and Charybdis - and the lessons in diplomacy he learnt prepared him well for the future. In the short term, the liquor controversy materially contributed to deterioration in relations

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1. Proceedings of Royal Colonial Institute, vol.27, 1895/6. Minutes of meeting held at Hotel Metropole, 12.11.95.

with the Niger Company. In the long run, however, the attitude of the anti-liquor lobby came in the end to be self-defeating; the moral assumptions of superiority forced down the African's throat could not but provoke a reaction.

The controversy over the arms traffic was somewhat different. It centred around the problem as to whether, in defiance of the regulations, large numbers of rifles etc., were being brought into the Protectorate. The import of arms and ammunition was governed by Article VIII of the Brussels Act, which laid down stringent controls over the traffic in regions defined as "infected by the slave trade". As soon as the Act was ratified by the Powers in January 1892, Macdonald was told to take the necessary steps to carry it out.[1] The facile way in which the Foreign Office delivered this instruction quite ignored the inadequate means at the disposal of the Protectorate to carry it out. Under the terms of the Act, all arms imported had to be placed in a government warehouse. At that time in the eight rivers the administration was far too busy clearing bush and erecting dwelling houses to concern itself with such refinements. It was not until Macdonald came home on leave that regulations were drawn up, based on the model ordinance issued for the West African colonies, arrangements being made to utilise certain of the merchants' stores

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1. F.O. 84/2193. F.O. to Macdonald, 15.1.92. Brussels Act in 84/2011.

as Government warehouses.[1]

When these regulations reached the Coast in March 1893 a delay followed, as the Acting Consul-Generalship changed hands three times in as many weeks, and it was not until July that arrangements were completed whereby certain stores were to be made bonded stores and used as Government warehouses.[2] Before Macdonald returned to the Protectorate in June 1893, however, a conference had been held at the Foreign Office as to the question of the instructions in force in the Protectorate and the drawing-up of various ordinances to establish the administration on a legal footing. The regulations for the control of arms were put into abeyance and Macdonald had no alternative but to fall back on existing instructions. What these were, no one in the Foreign Office was certain, since Johnston's prohibition of the importation of arms made at Opobo in 1887 could not be found in the library.

It was not surprising therefore that in view of the doubtful legal position, the traders bombarded the Foreign Office with awkward questions, well aware of the government's embarrassment. John Holt was always "bothering" Macdonald as to whether Johnston's regulations had any force, and when the

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1. F.O. 84/2194. Macdonald to F.O., 2.12.92.

2. F.O. 83/1237. W.H. Boyle & Co. to Crown Agents, 5.7.93.

Commissioner arrested Beresford Rhodes, "a most unprincipled villain", for importing rifles, the latter turned round and informed him that he was unaware of any regulations.[1] Boyle & Co. wanted to know when the Government had prohibited the sale of firearms in the Protectorate and in what papers the said prohibition was published. A similar question was received from Messrs Carson concerning gunpowder.[2] More important, the Germans began pressing as to when some form of joint action would be possible in both the Oil Rivers and the Cameroons on the enforcement of the Brussels Act.[3] To all these questions the Foreign Office could only answer that regulations under the Brussels Act would soon be published and come into force. Not surprisingly the news that an ordinance was about to be published and the tacit admittance that legal regulations were not yet in force acted as a stimulus to importation during 1893 rather than the reverse. During the year 1893/4 well over 258,000,000 percussion caps alone were imported, twice as many as in the previous year. Dilke's criticism in the Commons of the government's inaction, "looking to the illegality under the Brussels Act of the trade in caps to the interior", was entirely justified.[4]

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1. F.O. 2/63. Macdonald to Hill 14.1.93.
2. F.O. 83/1237, Boyle & Co. to Crown Agents, 5.1.93. 84/2249, Messrs. Carson to F.O. 17.5.92. There are other letters in 1237-1244.
3. F.O. 84/2217. Hatzfeldt to Rosebery, 28.10.92.
4. F.O. 83/1382. Question asked in Commons, 30.8.95, and correspondence.

The Niger Coast Fire Arms Ordinance was finally approved in April 1894,[1] together with the Customs and other ordinances. It was given legal inferiority to the Customs Ordinance, where a general prohibition was maintained under section forty-two. Nevertheless the powers granted under it were sweeping. All firearms lawfully imported by sea had to be deposited in a public warehouse, at importers' cost and risk; no trade was permitted by land except under special licence. Withdrawal from the warehouse was under the control of the Deputy Commissioner who could not under any circumstances authorise the sale of other than unrifled flintlocks and trade powder, and even this was restricted to areas where the slave trade was not prevalent. Stringent returns of arms and powder stored were required every six months. Special licence was required for the withdrawal of rifles and guarantees given that they would not be sold. Penalties for infringement were severe, ranging from a fine of £100 to twelve months' imprisonment with hard labour. The Commissioner's powers under the ordinance extended to the making of rules having the force of law, with similar penalties of fine and imprisonment for infringement. The ordinance was unusual in

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~~1. F.O. 83/1382. Question asked in Commons, 30.8.95, and correspondence.~~

1. F.O. 83/1314. Further incomprehensible delays prevented it from being put into force until August. ibid., min. by C.L.H., 10.8.94.

that the Commissioner exercised powers quite untrammelled by the Secretary of State, to whom there was no reference in the Ordinance.[1]

The passing of the Ordinance in the particular form which it took represented a new resolution on the part of government to stamp out the arms traffic. Hitherto they had accepted Macdonald's assurances that no rifles had been imported into the Protectorate since 1891, although the natives possessed from before that date large numbers of rifles and some rifled cannon. The campaigns against Nana and the Brass men seemed to indicate that, if the Commissioner was not wrong, there were still considerable dangers in the quantity of arms in the possession of the coastal middlemen. The propaganda of the Niger Company, that large-scale smuggling of rifles had taken place since 1891, although vigorously denied by the Commissioner, was not without its effect, nor was the comment of Blanchard, in charge of the African Direct Submarine Telegraph Company at Bonny until 1892, that the natives were still supplied with rifles by the Liverpool merchants, for "Sir Claude cannot be everywhere at once."[2] No laxity could be tolerated. Macdonald was therefore peremptorily informed in 1895 that the existing practice of

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1. F.O. 2/62. N.C.P. Fire Arms Ordinance.

2. F.O. 83/1376. Major Darwin to F.O., 12.3.95.

using traders' warehouses as public warehouses had got to cease. He must establish public warehouses under the sole control of the government and if traders were unwilling to rent on these terms he must build his own.[1]

The spasmodic intervention of the government was hardly very helpful to the Commissioner. A typical case in point was that of small shot. Macdonald had banned its import under the Ordinance, Kirk had reversed this on his visit to the Protectorate. After a lengthy correspondence, Macdonald was first upheld, then overruled, on the plea of Moor. It was August 1896 before Gallwey was authorised to withdraw the proclamation prohibiting small shot.[2] Despite, therefore, rather than because of the government, Macdonald endeavoured to maintain some control over the arms traffic. By the time he left the Protectorate tentative beginnings had been made in calling in arms for purposes of marking.[3] The arms taken at Brass and Benin were, of course, disposed of. The accusations of the Niger Company he attempted to silence by a series of surprise searches of merchants' premises. Whether smuggling

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1. 2/82, F.O. to Macdonald, 19.10.95.

2. F.O. 2/85. Macdonald to F.O., 14.11. & 21.11.95. 2/82, F.O. to Macdonald, 4.12.95 Moor had argued, not without some reason, that natives resorted to cutting up lead bars in default of shot, and the irregular shape of this ammunition caused more damage than would shot.

3. F.O. 2/85. Macdonald to F.O., 18.11.

had ceased by 1895, or whether the traders were too clever for the customs officers, the result was a nil yield. While it is unsafe to argue from an absence of evidence, there was little to suggest large-scale smuggling from outside the Protectorate. The smuggling that took place into the Niger Company's territory was probably a n atural process of rifles circulating within the territories before the establishment of the administration. The only catches made by the Customs officers were from ships - two convictions were obtained against captains of the Elder Dempster line for having un-declared revolvers and cap guns on board. At all times, even before the passing of the Ordinance, Macdonald had taken the liberty of seizing rifles, whether illegally or not. Cap guns were permitted until 1894, when they too came under the ban. Those in store at the time the act came into force, the Commissioner ordered to be shipped back to England where a number were converted into flintlocks for re-export.[1]

By the end of 1895 the Ordinance was operating with reasonable efficiency, public warehouses had been established and rules made for their smooth running, and the classification and marking of existing arms in the Protectorate was proceeding apace.[2] To Macdonald, however, the Ordinance was

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1. F.O. 83/1382. Memo by Macdonald, 28.12.95.

2. F.O. 2/85. Moor to F.O., 28.12.95.

no final solution. The disarming of the natives, if desirable, was impracticable. He felt that the only way to meet the question of the arms already in the Protectorate was to gain the goodwill of the Chiefs, and to purchase the better kinds of weapons at reduced rates. His tact brought several offers of machine guns and cannon during 1895, but he was unable to agree with the Chiefs as to price.

The trade patterns of the Protectorate barely altered during the Macdonald administration. Free imports retained their lead over dutiable imports in a rough ratio of 7:3. About 75% of the imports and 60% of the exports were conducted with Britain. The other countries with which the Protectorate had trade relations were France, Germany, Holland, the Niger Territories and the West Indies. Sweden was the only newcomer in 1895. Nearly 98% of the trade was done in British ships.

Inland the picture was the same. In the Eastern Delta the fall of Ja Ja failed to bring about a millennium. Indeed, so much did trade continue to follow the old patterns that before the administration was inaugurated there was a considerable body of white opinion pressing for his return. Neville, sent out to the Rivers by the steamship companies in 1890 with a view to obtaining beaches for the conduct of trade, reported:

> "The Merchants made a great mistake in going to the markets. Messrs Miller Bros' agent told me yesterday that they paid just as much now for their produce as when they resided at the mouth of the River, although in the present instance they have four extra factories to keep besides the expense of steam launches and lighters, and the total export from the River shows no increase on previous years. This view is confirmed by others I have consulted." 1

In 1893 the African Association sold their up-river factories at Akwette and Ohumbela markets for £7,000 to the native middlemen, so ending, as far as they were concerned, the experiment of trading directly in the interior. Miller Brothers protested to Macdonald when the middlemen threatened to boycott them if they did not do the same. The reply of the Commissioner was revealing: "The middlemen", he said,

> "could not compel them to leave the markets, but the Oil Rivers administration could not on the other hand compel the middlemen to trade with Miller Brothers or any other individual firm ... The action of the African Association in retiring from the markets is doubtless due to their having found that it is cheaper to have the native produce brought to their factories at the River's mouth than to do not see how I am to comp though I do not ventu to deal with /you/ in /your/ a similar course, I do, when, by /your/ action in the carrying trade to deal with /you/ in /your/ down-river factories, when, by /your/ action in establishing at the up-river markets, the said trade is threatened with extinction." 2

Even allowing for the fact that Miller Brothers and Macdonald

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1. F.O. 84/2157. Neville to Elder Dempster, 4.1.91. Comm. by Bond, 4.1.91.

2. F.O. 2/51. Macdonald to F.O., 8.2.93.

were "not the best of friends",[1] it was an extraordinary line for the Commissioner to take. Moreover, it seemed in direct contradiction to the promise that he had given John Holt in 1891, that

> "every possible protection and encouragement will be given to the opening and development of trade beyond the line now occupied by mercantile houses." [2]

In trade matters there was obviously going to be no exercise of the "despotic influence"[3] in favour of the European traders. In the Western Delta the pattern was not even disturbed until 1894, Nana ruling supreme.

In fairness to Macdonald, there was little incentive to disturb the existing patterns or allow them to be disturbed. In 1895 there were still vast tracts of the Protectorate which had never been visited by a white man. In terms of the limited resources of the Protectorate, penetration was slow, and Macdonald could not undertake the protection of traders who established themselves in advance of the flag. That the construction of roads and railways would have enabled the Protectorate to develop to a much greater degree, as Wall argued, was no doubt true,[4] but Macdonald had neither the inclination nor the resources to undertake a wholesale process

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1. F.O. 83/1375. Min. by C.L.H. on Miller Brothers to F.O., 25.2.95.
2. F.O. 84/2163. Min. by Macdonald, 2.5.91, on Holt to F.O., 30.4.91.
3. F.O. 84/2083. Memo by Macdonald 1.7.90.
4. Customs Report, N.C.P., 1895.

of development. He thought a railway unnecessary in view of the excellent waterways which tapped the principal producing centres; roads he did build, but strictly supplementary to the waterways. By 1895 there were limited communications by land in all the districts, the most useful being between the Upper Cross and Old Calabar, which overcame the difficulties of navigating the Cross during the dry season.[1] In adopting this course Macdonald proceeded according to sound economic sense - water was by far the cheapest method of transport, if slow, and roads had limited uses before the arrival of the lorry.

Macdonald's attempts to alter the unhealthy dependence of the Protectorate on palm oil were greeted with limited success. Some stimulus was given to the European traders to diversify by the oil season of 1894, which was one of the worst on record. A combination of low prices in Europe (the price of oil dropped to £12 per ton at one point on the London market), a severe epidemic of smallpox at the markets, and locust damage, nearly knocked the bottom out of the market.[2] During 1895 coffee, cocoa and rubber plantations sprang up at Warri, Quo Ibo and Old Calabar, as an insurance against another bad season, although a big problem was

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1. F.O. 2/84. Macdonald to Salisbury, Annual Report.
2. ibid. Macdonald to Salisbury, 25.7.95.

shortage of labour. The India Office was asked about the possibility of importing coolie labour, without much success - the problems of expense and climate being considered too great to be overcome.[1] Holt asked the administration for grants-in-aid for agricultural development, suggesting that some portion of the large revenue be spent in

> "reproductive operations calculated to open up new sources of labour and capital without which the greatly desired prosperity of the Protectorate cannot be assured."

This "remarkable request for the establishment of a state-aided industry"[2] drew no response from an administration, which by 1895 was hard-pressed to make ends meet.

It was perhaps in the nature of things that relations between the administration and the traders should be conducted on am ambivalent basis. Appreciative of the stability brought by the new administration, the trader resented the fact that he was no longer a law in the land. The result was an elaborate game of cat and mouse. The game had begun even before the establishment of the administration, as the traders tried to "beat the duties" and "starve" the administration by pouring in dutiable articles before the duties could be levied.[3] It was April 1892 before the shipments

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1. F.O. 64/1346. Afr. Assoc. to India Office, 1.9.93. 83/1243, I.O. to F.O., 20.11.93.

2. F.O. 84/2265. Holt to Rosebery, 7.12.92. Min. by H.P.A., 8.12.

3. F.O. 84/2111. Min. by H.P.A., 5.10.91.

began to resume their normal figures[1] as stocks became exhausted. With regard to the tariff, the Liverpool traders did not confine themselves to objecting to the spirit duties only. Great dissatisfaction was expressed at what they termed the exorbitant nature of the tariff, producing

> "some £300,000 per annum and this on a trade of about £1 million"

which was "simply ridiculous".[2] Anderson dismissed the opposition with contempt as "wont to criticize adversely",[3] yet if their estimates were grossly exaggerated, some of the comments of the Liverpool traders were shrewd, well-informed, and often adopted by the Protectorate. One of the earliest changes, as a result of Liverpool pressure, was the substitution of the imperial gallon for the old wine gallon as a unit of measurement.[4] Again, the traders' criticism of the lack of provision for rebates and bonding facilities for goods other than wine, spirits and tobacco were subsequently acted on by the Protectorate. Lastly even Lister agreed that the tax on salt was heavy.[5]

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1. F.O. 84/2246. Min. by T.V.L., 12.4.92.
2. Liverpool Journal of Commerce, 21.8.91.
3. F.O. 84/2172. Min. by H.P.A., 25.8.91.
4. F.O. 84/2179. F.O. to Afr. Assoc. 19.11.91.
5. Liverpool Journal, loc.cit. See also Chapter 5.

Much of the opposition was however factious, but this did not prevent the Foreign Office from being bombarded during the latter part of 1891. The grain distillers complained of British and foreign manufacturers being placed on the same footing, and wanted differential duties.[1] The African Association on the other hand were worried that administrative powers and the tariff could not be enforced against foreigners "which would put them at a trading disadvantage."[2] Their complaints varied from particular grievances about the tariff and the inconvenience of shipping specie to West Africa to meet the customs duties, to a general attack on the new system of administration.[3] To one of these the Foreign Office returned a comprehensive answer which revealed its firm belief that it was on the side of progress.

> "The new commercial system inaugurated in West Africa must inevitably cause local changes ... and ... the abolition of the monopoly of the middlemen, of which the members of the Association were prominent advocates cannot fail, for a time at least, to cause some discontent among the Coast natives ... It is now impracticable,

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1. F.O. 84/2177. Preston to Salisbury, 21.10.91. The proposal was of course against the Anglo-German agreement.

2. F.O.C.P. 6351. Afr.Assoc. to Salisbury, 28.7.91. The Association overlooked the fact that the Chiefs had delegated to Britain powers over foreigners within the Protectorate.

3. F.O.C.P. 6351, contains a number of relevant letters.

> even if it were desirable, to take any steps in the direction of reverting to the old system, or of compelling trade, in spite of new developments, to follow the old courses." 1

By December it was clear that the agitation was confined to the African Association. At a meeting organised by the Colonial Office, at which Anderson was present to meet the Chambers of Commerce interested in West African trade, the Chairman of the Liverpool Chamber asked Anderson if he had observed that among the grievances put forward

> "there was none relating to the Oil Rivers; the reason of this silence was that Liverpool was perfectly satisfied there."

On Anderson remarking that the African Association was still "pouring in complaints", he was told that "we need not mind them:

> "three or four firms, which had monopolised the trade, were discontented with the development which let in rivals and destroyed their exceptional position, but they were quite out of touch with the genuine feeling on the subject." 2

This confirmed the impression given by Macdonald in September. Hearing that the African Association was agitating to "get up a protest" against excessive duties, stating as a reason that they alone paid £150,000 a year in duties, he had ordered Wall to draw up a preliminary return for August. This showed that of the revenue of £9,000, the Association paid just

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1. F.O.C.P. 6351. F.O. to Afr. Assoc. 24.10.91.

2. F.O. 84/2180. Min. by H.P.A., 9.12.91.

30%.[1] As their arguments were exposed, the African Association accepted the inevitable, and tried a fresh tack - that of winning a position of privilege in the new order of things. In October they asked for government patronage to establish a banking department in the Protectorate.[2] Various unsuccessful attempts were made to acquire the supply tender for the administration, culminating in an attempt to acquire the agency in 1895 after Jephson's resignation.[3] Relations with the administration became realistic if not cordial. It was the Association who in 1895 lent the administration £20,000 to overcome the short-term difficulties created by the "Ivy" purchase.[4]

In the Rivers themselves the administration refused to recognise any concessions acquired before August 1891. Thus, Watts at Qua Ibo was told that the treaty obtained by him from the Kings and Chiefs, delegating all their powers and authorities to him, was null and void, since he had no authorisation from Her Majesty's Government to make it.

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1. F.O.C.P. 6351. Macdonald to F.O., 16.9.95.
2. ibid. Afr. Assoc. to Salisbury, 16.10.91. The government was not forthcoming.
3. F.O. 83/1384. Afr. Assoc. to F.O., 22.10.95.
4. F.O.C.P. 6351. Macdonald to F.O., 16.9.91.

Macdonald threatened him with imprisonment if he continued to import arms on the basis of his so-called concession.

If the Commissioner was firm in the face of a political challenge, he was largely powerless in the face of commercial harassment. There was little doubt that prices went up in 1891 far beyond what was warranted by the tariff. A trade gun, for instance, leapt from 6s. to 8s., and the duty was only 1s. The Commissioner's answer to this was to remain strictly neutral between black and white traders. The question of trade was one to be settled between the participants, and beyond apprising the European agents that he was aware of sharp practice in respect of prices, and informing the native middlemen that anything paid "over the odds" went into the pocket of the European traders, he would not go. This attitude itself, however, was a significant departure from the past. From Beecroft to Annesley, Consuls had been partisan in favour of the European. Now there was to be a calculated endeavour to raise the administration above the local disputes.

Balked by the Commissioner at the local level, the traders carried their attack into Parliament. The weak spot in the government's armour was undoubtedly the lack of published material on the Protectorate. The first complete report

on the administration did not appear until 1894, although thereafter they appeared annually - after 1896 in the form of Blue Books. There was no ulterior motive on the part of the government in withholding information - the Protectorate was hardly organised before then. In any case, the government had precedent on its side in that the Protectorate was regarded as being in the same class as a self-supporting colony, which did not receive a grant from imperial funds and was therefore not liable to provide information. In April 1894 Kimberley told Macdonald to send home annually a commercial report for publication,[1] and in June agreed in the House that an annual report would be submitted.[2] In October, however, the African Association was still protesting about the non-issue of any official statistics.[3] That Macdonald was dragging his feet was evident; what he objected to was not so much the publication of trade statistics, as the publication of his accounts in detail.[4] For the moment he won his point. The African Association's main desire was to see the steamship manifests, the statistics of trade and accounts being of secondary importance.[5] The report duly

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1. F.O. 2/62. Kimberley to Macdonald, 9.4.94.
2. F.O. 83/1312. Commander Bethel, M.P. Question, 6.6.94.
3. F.O. 83/1316. Afr.Assoc. to F.O., 26.10.94.
4. F.O. 2/64. Min. by H.P.A., 30.11.94.
5. ibid. Jephson to Hill, 19.11.94.

went before Parliament at the end of 1894, minus the accounts. For the future it was agreed that reports would be published to coincide with the financial year, the question of accounts being held over.[1]

Whatever official relations the Commissioner had with the traders, his personal relations with the agents on the spot were always good. Pinnock thought him quite "the best man Her Majesty's Government could possibly have found or selected", who would "soon make his power felt by the natives".[2] In part his popularity was due, as was evident from Pinnock, to the circumstances in which he found himself - the general consciousness on the part of the trading community that trade would be given a new impetus with the ending of the old consul and gunboat era. But personality could not entirely be left out of account. Pinnock was not the only one who felt that Macdonald was "an experienced and able administrator, firm and just in all his dealings." Coxon thought him quite "unstuffy" and open handed.[3] Similar sentiments were expressed by Elder Dempster, whose support

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1. ibid. Macdonald to F.O., 7.12.94. The first accounts were published in the first Blue Book, C.O. 464/1, 1896/7.

2. F.O. 84/2157. Jones to Macdonald, 18.2.91.

3. F.O. 84/2157. Jones to Macdonald, 18.2.91. Enc. Pinnock to Coxon. 2/63, Macdonald to Hill, P. 11.8.94. Enc. Coxon to Pinnock.

the Commissioner had from the start. This support took the tangible form of buoying the rivers, which saved the Protectorate from expense,[1] and of a gratuitous supply of regular information on trade shipments, and copies of manifests - an aid to the suppression of smuggling supplied much to the annoyance of the traders.[2] Elder Dempster's sorrow at the Commissioner's departure in 1896 was genuine.[3] Macdonald's personal capacity to win respect had contributed not a little to the commercial morality of the West Coast. Trade no longer governed but was governed.

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1. F.O. 84/2195. Macdonald to F.O., 30.1.92.

2. Some of the information supplied related to imports into the Niger Company's territories - a useful piece of espionage on Goldie. See e.g. F.O. 2/85, Macdonald to Campbell, 23.11.95. Also Macdonald P.P., notes from Elder Dempster various; F.O. 83, Volumes domestic various, for scattered references. e.g. 83/1241, statement communicated by Bond, 22.6.93; and A.R. Bezittingen Vols. 1301-4 passim.

3. F.O. 83/1440. Elder Dempster to F.O. 13.1.96.

CHAPTER EIGHT

CHRISTIANITY AND CIVILISATION IN THE NIGER DELTA[1]

Missionary enterprise in the Oil Rivers was of relatively recent origin in 1891.[2] The United Presbyterian Mission of Scotland arrived first, in 1846, and established itself in Old Calabar. Its main effort was concentrated on the Efika, and its influence was slow to spread, but by 1879 stations had been established up the Cross River at Ikonetu, Ikorofiang and Okoyong. The Church Missionary Society was the largest of the missions, beginning work at Bonny in 1864, Brass in 1874 and Okrika in 1880. Also on the coast were the

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1. It must be repeated here that the present purpose is to examine how certain individual Europeans saw the African peoples with whom they came into contact at a particular point in time. Thus, although African sources are used in this chapter where relevant, it is not intended to paint a comprehensive picture of Christianity and civilisation in the Oil Rivers, but strictly to analyse missionary enterprise in its relation to Macdonald and the administration between 1891 and 1896, and also to indicate how the administrators interpreted the word 'civilisation'. This chapter is, therefore, necessarily selective. For fuller elucidation of the events mentioned readers are directed to the sources indicated.

2. Excluded here are the short-lived efforts of the Portuguese and others in Benin and Warri in the 16th and 17th centuries, which left little trace. See A. Ryder, "Missionary Activities in the Kingdom of Warri to the Early Nineteenth Century", J.H.S.N., Vol. 2 no.1, 1960, & Benin and the Europeans, 1969, caps. 2 & 4.

Qua Ibo Mission, headquarters at Belfast, which began work among the Ibibio and Ibenos in 1887, and the Primitive Methodists, who moved from Fernando Po to Oron in 1892. In the hinterland were two Roman Catholic organisations, the Society of African Missions, headquarters at Lyon, and the Society of the Holy Ghost Fathers who, between them, carried out the evangelisation of the Ibo after 1885. It was, however, the activities of the Presbyterians and the C.M.S. which were of most moment to the Macdonald administration.[1]

The most notable feature of the work of the C.M.S. in the Rivers was that, up to 1890, it was under the directorship of a Nigerian, Bishop Ajayi Crowther. This was largely the result of the enlightened policy of Henry Venn, the secretary of the C.M.S. between 1841 and 1872, who saw that the only way to overcome the problems of climate and communications which inhibited European activity was to employ native agency. The task of the white missionary was reduced solely to the training of black clergy, and the organisation of a Church which, as soon as it became financially self-supporting, also became independent. The white missionary

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1. Two works of vital importance in the study of early missionary activity in the Rivers are J. Ajayi, Christian Missions in Nigeria 1841-1891, 1965, and E. A. Ayandele, The Missionary Impact on Modern Nigeria 1842-1914, 1966.

would then move on to virgin ground elsewhere and repeat the process.[1] In 1864 Venn persuaded the Archbishop of Canterbury to appoint Crowther, a freed Yoruba slave, as the first African Bishop on the Niger[2] - an enormous if vaguely defined diocese which included the Niger Valley and the coast of the Bights except where European missionaries were established.[3]

After Venn's death in 1872 the policy towards native pastorates changed, reflecting the new urge of Europeans to rule over Africans. As European missionaries became part and parcel of the ruling class, so the position of Bishop Crowther as head of the local Church began to look more and more anomalous. Gradually his power was eroded by the C.M.S., first by the appointment of Europeans to manage the temporalities, then by the setting-up of a European-dominated finance committee. In 1890 matters came to a head when the mission was purged by white missionaries who preferred sweeping charges of immorality against the African clergy. The Bishop resigned from the Finance Committee, and died in the last hours of 1891. The parent committee made it quite clear

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1. Ajayi, "Henry Venn and the Policy of Development", J.H.S.N. Vol.1 no.4, 1959.

2. Ajayi, Christian Missions, p.180 ff.

3. Ajayi, op.cit., p. 206.

that no African bishop would be appointed as successor and the African converts, seeing that the whole question of Bishop Crowther was tied up with that of the capacity of Africans to govern themselves, seceded from the C.M.S. to form the Niger Delta Native Pastorate Church.[1]

It was in a potentially explosive situation, therefore, that Macdonald arrived in the Rivers in July 1891. Two points are of fundamental importance in understanding the policy which he followed toward the missions. One was his belief that the government of the Rivers could only be carried on with the support of and by consultation with the native rulers. The other was his own personal commitment to Christianity. Macdonald was a Presbyterian, "a good sabbatarian", who in addition to his manifold duties, found time to be a full and active member of the Church Committee of the Presbyterian Mission in Old Calabar.[2] On both these counts Macdonald stood apart from the normal run of administrators on the west coast. The evangelical disposition moved a normally placid temperament to violent opposition to the racial crudities of some of the white missionaries and prepared the way logically for what followed.

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1. These events are described in Ajayi, op.cit. pp.206-274, Ayandele, op.cit. cap.7; J. B. Webster, The African Churches among the Yoruba, Oxford 1964, pt. 1.

2. U.P. Minutes, 30.5.93.

For Macdonald quickly indicated that in the dispute between the new Delta church and the C.M.S. he was not prepared to use his political power in favour of Salisbury Square. Indeed behind an officially proclaimed neutrality[1] he stoutly defended the African clergy. Strictly from a political point of view he favoured them because of their assistance to the Government in tribal matters, informing Ingham, the Bishop of Sierra Leone that as far as he was concerned white missionaries were "of no use at all".[2] His support, however, ran to more than words. At a particularly delicate moment, when the Church Missionary Society hoped that the Delta pastorate would collapse from lack of financial support and that a reconciliation would be arranged on the Society's terms, Macdonald chose to accept the position of patron of the pastorate and offered Archdeacon Crowther £200 per year for industrial training in the mission schools.[3] The Commissioner also attended Bishop Crowther's funeral in Lagos[4], a gesture not lost on the African community.

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1. Lambeth, Benson 1 11g, Macdonald to D.C. Crowther 6.7.92.
2. C.M.S. G5/A3/O, Bishop of Sierra Leone to Wigram 7.8.91.
3. Lambeth, Benson 1, 11g Macdonald to Archdeacon Crowther 15.7.92.
4. C.M.S. 63/A3/65 Allan to Wigram 1.1.92. James Johnston led the service and delivered a sermon said by Allan to be "much too racial".

Instead of collapsing, the Delta Pastorate flourished under Macdonald's patronage. The removal of Ja Ja had crushed the last obstacle to Christian penetration on the coast. Bonny, the centre of the new pastorate, entered into a new period of prosperity and the Church underwent a phenomenal expansion. By the middle of 1892 there were twenty chapels and nearly 1,000 converts in Ja Ja's old markets alone. The Pastorate's annual income for the first six years of its existence averaged not far short of £2,000. Opobo followed Bonny's lead and was responsible for churches in the interior as far as Aba.[1] By contrast the Church Missionary Society stations at Brass and Abonema were nearly empty - converts had left en masse.

It was natural that Salisbury Square found the Commissioner's attitude intensely irritating. Their temper could hardly have been improved when the Commissioner patronisingly observed that the Society's stations at Brass and Abonema would be better off "if the C.M.S.[2] settled its dissensions with the Delta Pastorate". Already, however, they were coming to this conclusion themselves. As Ayandele has noted, the Society's hope of nipping the movement in the bud by asserting rights over land and property had really crashed on the land

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1. Epelle E., The Church in Opobo, Aba 1938.
2. C.M.S. 63/143/06 Macdonald to C.M.S. 10.3.94.

tenure system, whereby land which ceased to be used for the purpose given by the grantee reverted to the people.[1] At an interview between Whiting and Baylis, on the one hand, and Macdonald, home on leave, on the other, an agreement was hammered out. Both sides reserved their opinion on the main point at issue, and Whiting after asking Archbishop Benson to use his influence with the Commissioner, refused to go back on the main C.M.S. point of a European successor to Crowther. The proposal to create African assistant bishops was, however, satisfactory to Macdonald, who agreed to endeavour to promote a reconciliation between the pastorate and the C.M.S. He refused, however, to have James Johnston, whom Carter was trying to push out of Lagos, as an instrument of reconciliation within the Protectorate.[2]

Macdonald was far from being dogmatic about the question of white versus black missionaries. His main concern was that the missions should be a success. He saw Christianity as a unique instrument for the social betterment of the people; any factors, such as disputes between missions, which detracted

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1. Ayandele op.cit. p.226 also C.M.S. 63/A3/05. Report of Deputation investigating the split. March 1892.

2. C.M.S. 63/A3/06. Memo. of interview 2.3.93. Johnston the unique nationalist instrumental in stirring up opinions in 1891 had paradoxically remained within the C.M.S. Ayandele E. "An Assessment of James Johnston and His Place in Nigerian History: Part II" J.H.S.N. Vol.3 No.1, 1964.

from the effectiveness of the missions were to be deplored. He supported the native pastorate not only because of personal beliefs but because it was successful, and he believed that the efforts of the C.M.S. to suppress it could only create dissension.

Ample illustration that Macdonald was not against the C.M.S., as such, was given by his action over the stations at Abonema and Brass. In February 1894 he sent a telegram to Salisbury Square expressing concern that the missions had been for several months without a head, and urging immediate action. The reasons for action he revealed in a letter the following month - on the one hand a note from the New Calabar chiefs requesting the Commissioner to remove the mission once and for all from their country and on the other a statement by the Brass Chiefs that they were financially unable to support a mission.[1]

The discontent at New Calabar was caused by the over-zealousness of a convert, Ulue, an interpreter to the Consular Court, whom Macdonald had lent to the mission at the request of the local head of the C.M.S., Dobbinson.[2] Ulue's proselytising

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1. The complete correspondence was communicated to the F.O. in 2/63 17.3.94.

2. The Reverend Dobbinson was a member of the finance committee which humiliated Crowther. His views mellowed with the years until he was quite "pro African"; Webster op.cit. pp.16-17.

alarmed the chiefs, who feared a slave rising, and it took several hours of harangue on the part of the Commissioner before he convinced them "of the extreme folly of their request". Macdonald removed the offender to Old Calabar.

The New Calabar meeting gave the Commissioner his chance to promote a reconciliation between the pastorate and the Society. Robbinson happened to be at Degema in March, and on the way from Old Calabar, Macdonald induced the Reverend Boyle at Bonny to accompany him to meet Robbinson. The two clerics held discussions and agreed that the latter should take charge of the Abonema mission until arrangements could be made by the C.M.S. for the further carrying on of the work. This represented a real breakthrough and Macdonald coupled it with an earnest plea to settle all dissensions.

At Brass the question was somewhat different. According to the Reverend D. Williams, the native pastor temporarily residing there, the Brass Chiefs had no objection to the mission, (he, indeed, had a congregation of 250) but they had informed him that, as their oil markets had been taken from them by the Niger Company, they could not afford to maintain a mission. Macdonald urged the committee to give some financial help, since the two churches, with their schools attached, were being ruined by neglect. This he regarded as a job for the C.M.S., since the native pastorate could not

afford the money which it was necessary to spend.[1]

Macdonald, unfortunately, had not met Tugwell, the bishop appointed as Crowther's successor[2] in 1894, as, by the time the Bishop arrived in the Protectorate, Macdonald was home on leave. Moor was left with strict instructions to communicate with Tugwell as to the exact relationships between the Pastorate and the C.M.S. The reconciliation was all that could be desired and the Commissioner was overjoyed. Tugwell was welcomed by Archdeacon Crowther and the two drew up a constitution to regulate the affairs of the Delta Church, for submission to the Archbishop of Canterbury. The pastorate was to be regarded as a true branch of the Church of England within an independent African diocese. The constitution which was ratified in 1897 preserved the identity of the pastorate, which was guaranteed a Bishop as soon as it was able to support one.[3] By the end of 1894 mission work was beginning again to advance on all fronts. The Brass mission was manned with a staff of three, and Archdeacon Crowther completed arrangements for the taking over of the Abonema mission, where

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1. F.O. 2/63. Macdonald to F.O. 17.3.94.

2. He was in fact the second. The first, Hill, had died in January 1894 six months after consecration. Webster op.cit. p.39.

3. The C.M.S. reneged on its promise in 1902. Ayandele op.cit. pp.236-7.

he was received in a friendly manner by the New Calabar chiefs.[1] This outcome was due in no small degree to the Commissioner himself.

Macdonald's zeal in the cause of Christianity was naturally even more strongly reflected in matters relating to the mission of his own church. His erection of Old Calabar into something akin to a capital city owed not a little to the primary establishment there of the Presbyterians. Here, amongst his fellow Scots, Macdonald created a 'home' which an observer described as

> "really quite civilised with its official residences. Here you can indulge in cricket, lawn tennis and golf. 2

With pardonable exaggeration Macdonald, looking back over twenty years, described it as

> "a beautiful park, dotted with fine buildings ... now ... one of the show places of West Africa." 3

Pride of place in Old Calabar went to the Hope Waddell Institute opened in 1895, probably the most ambitious and certainly the most comprehensive education scheme in Africa before the twentieth century. Planned by the mission board, the

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1. F.O. 2/64. Macdonald to F.O. 23.11.94, including Baylis to Macdonald 4.5.94 and Tugwell to Moor 23.10.94.

2. "Life in a Gunboat on the West Coast of Africa by a Naval Officer", United Services Magazine July 1899

3. Geographical Journal September 1914.

Institute purported to cover all fields of education, industrial, mission, teacher training and secondary. Courses were offered to both boys and girls - the girls learning domestic science and dress making, the boys naval engineering, carpentry, masonry, blacksmithing, coopering and civil engineering. Teacher training courses were offered in English and religious subjects, as well as technical subjects. The Protectorate provided the Institute with a brickworks complete with equipment at Okorofiong as well as £200 per annum from funds for industrial training. The institute was unique in tropical Africa. The inspiration for it was provided by Dr. Robert Laws, who had already made a name for himself as a colleague of Livingstone and for a less ambitious industrial school in Central Africa. He visited the Protectorate in 1893 and made a comprehensive survey of its industrial needs.[1] That the plan was brought to fruition in the remarkably short time of two years owed much to the energy of the Protectorate's Public Works Department which expedited building materials and arranged for labour under the eager eye of the Commissioner.[2]

One of the most extraordinary of the Scots colony at Old Calabar was the woman missionary, Mary Slessor. Born in

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1. U.P. Minutes 30.5.93.

2. Goldie H. Calabar and its Mission, p.350 ff.

Dundee in 1858, she had come out to Old Calabar in 1879. From there she moved up the Cross River to Okoyong, where, until her death in 1915, she exercised an extraordinary influence amongst the people. Macdonald, recognising this influence, had asked her to be his representative amongst the Okoyong, formal recognition following in 1894 as President of the Native Court.[1] In 1895 he paid her the honour of an official visit. A remarkable scene ensued, with the Commissioner on one side in all his finery and the "scruffy but intrepid" white missionary with the chiefs on the other. He assured them that

> "he had not come to take away their lands but to help them govern their country themselves ... but they must recognize the laws of justice and humanity."

The chiefs replied that

> "they had heard the words but only once, which did not give them importance. But now that they had heard them twice, they were certain they were good words and they would obey." 2

Such were the realities of government in the Protectorate.

The missions had no cause to bewail the indifference of the Protectorate administration to the Christian message. During this period two new missions were encouraged to enter on the scene: the Roman Catholics in the shape of Father Lutz

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1. Probably the only woman ever to hold this position until after the 2nd World War.

2. O'Brien B. "She had a Magic" p.180. Livingstone W.P. "Mary Slessor of Calabar".

of the Society of African Missions, who asked for land in New Calabar, and the Native Baptist Church under Mojola Agbebi, who began work amongst the Ijo.[1] The fall of Nana allowed missionary enterprise to flourish west of the Delta. Like Ja-Ja, Nana was an upholder of the traditional faith and had always refused to allow missions to settle in his territory. He boasted to Fox Bourne of the Aborigines Protection Society of the power of his ju ju, which could scare away cannibals.[2] In 1893 both Moore Harper and Phillips, the officers in charge of Benin River and Warri, had begged Hill "most earnestly" for Christian Missions to begin work amongst the Edo and Itsekiri.[3] In 1894, even before the campaign had taken place, Tugwell was warned to be ready "for a spiritual entry into the territory".[4] Indeed every military campaign of the period against the centres of paganism saw a strengthening of the Cross. The military campaigns were not always Macdonald's intention - the missionary enterprise invariably was. Nor were the sometimes unwilling recipients

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1. F.O. 2/63 Macdonald to F.O. 17.3.93. Ayandele op.cit. p.180
2. AP.S. Nana to Fox Bourne 5.11.94.
3. C.M.S. 63/A3/06. Hill to Wigram 2.1.93. Harper was nephew of the Bishop of New Zealand and Phillips son of the Archdeacon of Barrow-in-Furness.
4. C.M.S. 63/A3/06. Tugwell to Baylis 23.7.94.

always ungrateful. In 1897 the first lodge of freemasons in the Protectorate was founded at Old Calabar. It was called Macdonald's Lodge and formed a link between the old and the new, the pagan and the Christian.[1]

A meeting point for missionary enterprise and the administration was over the question of slavery.[2] It will be remembered that in 1890 one of the principal objections to erecting the Oil Rivers into a colony had arisen on this question. Macdonald had early recognised the impossibility of a complete abolition of slavery. For a start it would have required a large force and social resources far beyond those at the Protectorate's disposal. In the second place he felt that he had to some degree pledged himself to the Chiefs in 1889 that nothing would be done precipitately. His attack on the problem was, therefore, cautious, and largely took the form of issuing free papers to any domestic slaves who could prove continuous neglect and ill treatment. The papers in theory constituted a protection against interference from all persons within the effective zone of the administration and allowed the holder absolute freedom in disposing of his or her

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1. First Grand Lodge of Nigeria. Masonic Directory 1951.

2. An analysis of the social side of slavery in the delta may be found in Jones G.I. The Trading States of the Oil Rivers Oxford 1963, p.57 ff.

services. Up to 1895 comparatively few of these papers had been granted.[1] This either illustrated the absence of genuine discontent amongst the slave population or a reluctance to bring a case before the Consular Court. The system was, anyway, far too crude to extend throughout the Protectorate. Moor was instructed to obtain the assent of chiefs to proper regulations under which freedom would be conferred by the courts in cases of ill usage, or papers of freedom given to masterless negroes.[2]

Domestic slavery was, however, merely the tip of the iceberg. The problems created by prisoners captured in the conflicts in the interior, who often ended up as human sacrifices, or those enslaved or seized for debt, were hardly amenable to the intermittent intervention of the Consular Courts. Here Macdonald freely admitted that he had little ultimate sanction beyond the use or the threat of force. As soon as a sufficient force of constabulary was gathered in a district, the chiefs were called together and harangued by the Commissioner on the evils of seizing a neighbour's person and chattels, a process which usually involved war and general stoppage of trade. If these harangues were part of the process of 'civilising' the African they were a very raw form of

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1. 2/85 Moor to F.O. 25.12.95. Under 100.

2. 2/100 F.O. to Moor 18.2.96.

civilisation.[1]

Civilisation was a key word in the mind of the Commissioner, who did not generally think in terms of warfare. The Vice Consuls were ordered to travel, explain the Protectorate's plan for the people and earn goodwill and trust by their own example. Their stations were expected to be islands of civilisation in the midst of 'savagery'. Warri was a model example. Everything there was clean, orderly and new:

> "On one side of the stream are endless mangrove swamps mud and oozy slime; on the other a strip some half a mile long has been hewn out of the cottonwoods which tower behind it like a sombre wall, and here the trading factories stand ... In the centre there stretches a dusty compound, where the union jack floats over the stately Protectorate Consulate, a handsome wooden building, white roofed, white walled ... with cool verandahs, and the space underneath between its supporting piles turned into a spacious court room and offices. One's first impression on looking at it is a feeling of partial blindness. In that fierce sunlight the whitewash seems incandescent, and there is a certain oiliness about the surface of every African river which flings back the light like a polished mirror." 2

From these centres the officers dispensed justice and struck out into new realms. Gallwey proved a particularly vigorous exponent of hinterland penetration. In October 1891 when he had barely settled at his post, he was off up river

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1. F.O. 2/85 Macdonald to F.O. 17.12.95.

2. Bindloss op.cit. pp.143-4.

to visit the Urhobo oil markets.[1] His objects in so doing were

> "the establishment of law and order; the selection of suitable sites for a vice consulate, barracks and constabulary posts; to impress upon the natives the great advantages to be gained by the cultivation of such crops as coffee, cocoa etc. and enquire into the reasons for the slackness of trade in the Sobo district generally." 2

The ambitious nature of his programme of civilization was scarcely fulfilled. He was generally welcomed and succeeded in getting as far as Abraka, nearly 120 miles up the Ethiope River. That the nature of his welcome was dictated by contemporaneous Itsekiri-Urhobo relations was highly likely, for in the event Gallwey signed no treaties nor was the enthusiasm with which he was greeted lasting.[3] He excused his failure to assert his authority, by the fact that the people had no recognized ruler and would neither understand nor observe treaties until European influence was established amongst

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1. In December Gallwey also went from Benin to Lagos through the interior creeks. A canoe was lent by Nana who refused to lend 'boys' on the grounds they would abscond when the Vice Consul got to Lagos. Dögho supplied the deficiency to Gallwey's gratitude. F.O. 84/2194. Macdonald to F.O. 9.3.92. Inc. by Gallwey.

2. F.O. 84/2111. Macdonald to F.O. 12.12.91. Inc. by Gallwey.

3. Salubi A. "The Establishment of British Rule in the Urhobo Country" J.H.S.N. Vol.1 No.3 1958. For an analysis of the later reaction of the Urhobo to British rule. O. Ikime, Niger Delta Rivalry, London 1969.

them.[1] The one tangible result of the expedition was the establishment of the consular post at Sapele, a post calculated to break Nana's monopoly by tapping the Urhobo markets direct.[2]

Gallwey's greatest achievement was a visit to Benin City in 1892. His aim from the start was to conclude a treaty:

> "All previous attempts in this direction have been futile - the last attempt having been made by Consul Annesley in 1890." 3

Obviously success here would be a feather in the cap of the new administration. Gallwey succeeded beyond his expectations. After being kept waiting three days he induced the Oba to agree to the treaty.[4] It was a triumph which on paper at least brought a large area of the hinterland west of the Lower Niger under British protection. Gallwey was enthusiastic about the possibilities for the development of trade, mentioning ivory, copal, mahogany, gums, fibres and hard woods as well as coffee and cocoa.[5] Little was done, however,

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1. Nevertheless when he revisited Abraka in May 1892 he did sign a treaty. F.O. 2/51 Macdonald to Rosebery 12.1.93.

2. Ryder op.cit. p.267 also Salubi art.cit.

3. F.O. 84/2194 Macdonald to Salisbury 16.5.92.

4. The treaty was on the standard form. For a detailed account of Gallwey's visit see Ryder op.cit. pp.265-272.

5. Gallwey returned with an ivory tusk which Macdonald said was the property of the Government. "I told him I would not do it again and so I was permitted to retain the ivory." Proc.R.G.S. South Australia 1914 pp.88-9.

to follow up his initiative. The disorganisation and stoppage of trade upon the fall of Nana, and the report that McTaggart of the Niger Company had reached the city in 1894 led the Protectorate to send another expedition under Crawford during 1895, which failed, however, to get further than Gwato. Macdonald then on leave, ascribed the failure of the expedition to the fact that it was undertaken at the rainy season of the year.[1] The initiative was obviously Moor's, who was already talking in terms of the force needed to open up the country, to rid it of its fetish priests and develop trade.[2] Macdonald refused to agree that the time had yet come for force or that peace measures would be ineffectual. The difference in approach of the two men foreshadowed the change of policy under Moor. For the moment the Commissioner got his way. Moor was told to utilise the next dry season "in patient and persistent efforts to open up communication with the King" and to employ "all peaceable means" before the question of force could be considered.[3]

Kenneth Campbell, the Vice Consul at Bonny, made the Protectorate's first penetration into Ibo country. His

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1. F.O. 2/85 Macdonald to F.O. 29.10.95.

2. F.O. 2/84 Moor to F.O. 12.9.95. He was backed by Kirk. F.O. 83/1441 Kirk to Anderson P. 16.2.96.

3. F.O. 2/85 Macdonald to F.O. 29.10.95. F.O. 2/82 F.O. to Moor 8.11.95. See also Ryder op.cit. p.277-283.

travels in 1892 took him as far as Elebe about fifty miles north of Degema. In his report to the Commissioner he painted a golden picture of the fertility of the land: "The farms are large and surround the towns", the country was heavily populated and "the oil palm is to be seen the whole way."[1] Here were the real riches of the country into which the sooner the administration moved the better. Not unnaturally the Chiefs of New Calabar were uneasy about this development. They threw every obstacle in Campbell's way, even inducing his carriers to abscond, but he merely proceeded to make up his party from Consular Krooboys and stopped King Amachree's subsidy of £400.[2]

Campbell's explorations revealed the diffuse nature of Ibo authority. For this reason Macdonald asked the Foreign Office for 500 treaty forms with a view to opening up the country as soon as opportunity occurred. The Foreign Office, suspecting some inconvenient treaty-making move against the Niger Company in the Delta, gave him 200 and wanted to know why he required so many.[3] The question apparently irritated

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1. F.O. 84/2194. Macdonald to F.O. 9.3.92.

2. Anene Southern Nigeria p.143. Anene places this incident at Okrika instead of New Calabar. It seems unlikely, however, that Campbell could so have confused his geography as to be 30 miles east of where he thought he was; moreover, Amachree (Amahuri) is the Kalabari royal clan. The King of Okrika at this time was Phibia. See Jones op.cit. table p.133 & following chapter for the complex clan relationships of New Calabar.

3. F.O. 2/62 F.O. to Macdonald 26.11.94.

the Commissioner, who stoutly defended his judgement of the Ibo and his approach to treaty making:

> "The large Ibo tribe ... stretches, under various names and talking various dialects, from Calabar to Benin; these people do not acknowledge any one paramount Chief or Chiefs, but are split into numerous small tribes, sometimes consisting of one single town, and if it is the wish of Her Majesty's Government that the Protectorate should be established by right of Treaty it will I presume be necessary to make treaties with them all ... If H.M's advisers are of opinion that the Proclamation of a Protectorate over these territories is sufficient to constitute them a British possession, it might perhaps be possible to abolish the making of these treaties, which is a considerable labour and expense to this administration". 1

Hill failed to grasp the point. He observed that

> "with such a changing set of chiefs it seems hardly necessary to make so many individual treaties in our Protectorate for each separate treaty will probably be repudiated either by the signatory Chief or his neighbour."

But he did not propose to relieve the Commissioner's burden by accepting the suggestion of a blanket proclamation to cover the whole Ibo hinterland. He did, however, allow that Macdonald might be given the extra forms asked for, and the necessary discretion. Anderson agreed, while adding "We would not allow repudiation."[2] How he proposed to prevent it he did not say. The whole episode is illustrative of the officials' confused state of thinking on the legal status of

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1. F.O. 2/83 Macdonald to F.O. 14.1.95.

2. F.O. 2/83 Minutes by C.L.H. and H.P.A. 22.2.94.

the Protectorate.[1] It was not surprising that Macdonald found the equivocation of the Foreign Office so irritating.

Of the Vice Consuls at the stations Gallwey and Campbell seemed by far the most vigorous and effective. Always on the move, they sent a stream of reports to the Commissioner at Old Calabar. Gallwey's report on the station for the first year of the administration ran to over thirty pages.[2] Armstrong at Opobo sent in superficial reports, often late,[3] and D. C. Macdonald seemed far too engrossed in the grievances of the Brassmen to send in any reports at all. He rarely travelled beyond Nembe. Synge at Warri was plagued by ill health, and lived constantly in Gallwey's shadow. He had the best station of them all as far as accommodation was concerned, but was rarely able to enjoy it. His successor Crawford was a man of more vital personality, whose career was cut short in 1897 as a member of Phillips' ill fated expedition to Benin.

In the east of the Protectorate the lead was taken not by a Vice Consul but by the redoubtable member of the intelli-

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1. It also revealed the F.O. acceptance of the now discredited view that the absence of paramount chiefs was synonymous with the absence of political organisation. Anene Southern Nigeria p.162.

2. F.O. 2/51 Macdonald to Rosebery 12.1.93 Inc. by Gallway.

3. E.g. F.O. 2/51 Macdonald to F.O. 2.9.93 Enc. which contains little beyond platitude about how friendly the natives are.

gence department, Casement.[1] Roger Casement was the administration's odd job man. In between helping with Treasury work and deputising for Wall, he made a series of journeys in the Cross river basin: from Itu, 60 miles upstream from Old Calabar, to the Opobo River; from Esene on the Opobo to Ikorasum, some six miles above Eket on the Qua Ibo; and a road survey from Old Calabar striking the Cross some 150 miles up river.[2] With incredible courage, Casement undertook these journeys quite unarmed, relying solely on his native wit to win the trust and good will of the people. Despite many narrow escapes, he found the people generally not unfriendly although some were marked by a "certain surliness and dislike to the presence of a white man." Their apprehension was understandable for as the people of Okoyong explained to him

> "hitherto, they had only looked for the white man by the river now they must expect him from the land as well, and if they should have trouble with the government again, where were they to run away?" 3

The practical example set by the Consul General was the model for his subordinates. Macdonald, however, had less time for pure exploration and was more involved in the settlement of palavers. These were frequent, but up until 1894 little

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1. Anene p.150-1. Anene is wrong in calling Casement a Vice Consul.

2. Reports on these journeys mostly undertaken in 1894 may be found in F.O. 2/63.

3. F.O. 2/63 Annual Report with encs. 21.8.94.

bloodshed marred the course of the Protectorate. This was undoubtedly due to the fact that disputes were settled before they were allowed to escalate. Personal factors were also prominent. Macdonald had early endeared himself to the peoples by two acts - the return of Ja Ja's body to the Protectorate,[1] and the disbanding of Annesley's police force.[2]

More troublesome than Annesley's police force was the legacy left by the Consul's repulse from Akwette. This had raised a challenge to British authority in the hinterland which could not be ignored.[3] The story emerged in palaver at Akwette on 14th October 1891. Disturbances had broken out on June 8th as a result of a dispute between Watson, the agent for Miller Brother and some of the Akwette boys.[4] It was not certain who was to blame, but when the King came down to the beach with the other Chiefs, order was at once restored, and everything that had been taken by the boys was instantly returned. Despite the King's entreaty Watson proceeded at

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1. Ja Ja died on 7 July 1891 at Santa Cruz, Teneriffe, on his way home after the British government had agreed to the termination of his exile. Macdonald arranged for the body to be exhumed and brought to Opobo. Anene Southern Nigeria pp. 140-1.

2. Supra cap.6.

3. Anene Southern Nigeria p.142.

4. This account is taken from F.O. 84/2111 Macdonald to F.O. 8.8.91. F.O.C.P. 6351 Macdonald to Salisbury 17.10.91. F.O. 84/2250 Annesley to F.O. May 1892.

once to Opobo, and reported the matter in a highly coloured manner to Bruce, his superior, who sent for Annesley.

Annesley collected together a force of soldiers and proceeded to Akwette on 17th. The Bonny men entreated the Consul not to open fire on the Akwette people, since "the palaver could easily be settled without force". Annesley, however, refused to listen, opened fire and killed one of the Chief's wives, Eleche. Not unnaturally the Akwette people then retaliated, drove the Consul off, wounding him and five of his men in the process.

Macdonald's equitable solution of this complex dispute is worth recording in full:

> "I gave judgement that Akwette people were to be fined 10 puncheons (£60) for unruly behaviour and that all trade goods belonging to the European traders and Bonny men were to be restored to them by the natives. This decision gave universal satisfaction, and the Aquetta people have promised to pay the fine and restore the goods within a month.
>
> I informed the European traders that as they had established themselves amongst a people who had not signed a Protectorate treaty with Her Majesty's Government they had done so at their own risk, and that therefore I could not hold myself responsible for their house, property, and plant that had been destroyed. They had also called in Annesley's aid, and they must abide by the result of any action he had thought fit to take.
>
> During the attack on the village several houses were burnt. Two of these belonged to one of the most respectable trader chiefs in the Bonny district.

> As the Bonny Chiefs did not request the Consul's attendance and appear to have done what they could to prevent him from taking extreme action, I venture to submit a claim made by the above chief. Should Your Lordship approve I propose paying this Chief £50 as compensation out of any surplus "comey" that Annesley may have remitted home.
>
> As soon as the £80 fine is paid, I propose sending part of it through Armstrong to the children of the woman Eleche ..." 1

The willingness of the Akwette people not only to accept a fine which Macdonald had no legal right to impose, but also to sign a treaty (which they did on the following day) emphasized that it was the Commissioner's approach which was decisive. The first expansion of the Protectorate into the hinterland was secured without using force. Trade was resumed at Akwette and "tranquillity and quiet prevail".[2]

Justice combined with firmness had its effect. Macdonald had already had occasion on 5th September 1891 to harangue the Okrikans concerning what he termed "the shame and disgrace" of their cannibal Ju Ju house. There was also a small matter of an outstanding fine imposed by Hewett in 1888. On 21st October Macdonald informed the people that

> "Her Majesty's Government had now waited for three years for the full amount due, and that it was my intention to wait at Okrika till the fine was paid, but for every 24 hours I waited after the first 24 a sum of 10 puncheons (£80) would be charged." 3

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1. F.O. 84/2111 Macdonald to Salisbury 17.10.91.
2. ibid.
3. F.O. 84/2111 Macdonald to F.O. 23.10.91.

The amount was quickly forthcoming.

Once more did the Okrikans try the Protectorate government, this time waiting till Macdonald had gone on leave in 1892. A report of human sacrifice took Campbell post haste up to the town on 19th November. The Vice Consul demanded that the five who had committed the "atrocity" should be given up. Three were given up by Oko Dsago, a powerful chief who had taken the highest grade in the Ekine society,[1] and two by the King, whom Macdonald described as "a nonentity".[2] The King's attempt to assert his authority over Oko by fining him for the acts committed by his boys led to disturbances between the two factions and stoppage of trade. Campbell again went up river in December and arrested Oko, and the disturbances at once ceased.[3] Meanwhile Macdonald had ordered Moor to investigate.[4] The contrast in the methods of the two men immediately appeared. Macdonald's use of personal authority and influence was replaced by all the paraphernalia of a show trial with gunboat, and a large Protectorate force to demonstrate to the Okrikans that there was "now a permanent force at the command of the Government".[5] Amidst all this the

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1. For the influence of Ekine, Jones op.cit. pp.67-8.
2. F.O. 84/2194 Macdonald to Rosebery 5.12.92.
3. Ibid. Moor to Rosebery 19.12.92.
4. Ibid. Memo by Macdonald 30.11.92.
5. Ibid. Moor to Rosebery 19.12.92.

sentences of imprisonment on three of the five 'boys' went largely unnoticed[1] as did Campbell's considerable achievement in imposing his personality with no force at his disposal.

It was not that Macdonald was any sort of pacifist. It was rather a recognition that more could be achieved by persuasion and contact with the people than by force. When force was necessary, he used it reluctantly, hoping that the threat would be sufficient. The discontent at Brass was a typical case in point. During 1893 trouble broke out with a threat by the people of Fishtown to attack the European factories. Their timing was unfortunate, since two gunboats happened to be in the river along with Macdonald. The Commissioner immediately sent for Protectorate troops from Calabar, and asked the naval officers ~~for~~ to land marines to calm the fears of the Europeans. Meanwhile he opened negotiations with the people of Fishtown. They refused to come to him, on the grounds that they were afraid of the gunboats, so, nothing loth and with a complete absence of pride, he took Captain Macdonald with him unarmed and saw them. The courage of the Commissioner had an immediate calming effect. The Chiefs agreed to the stationing of a Protectorate force in the river to keep the peace, and accepted the warning that any breach would be punished.[2]

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1. F.O.C.P. 6351 Moor to Rosebery 25.12.92.

2. F.O. 2/51 Macdonald to Rosebery 15.7.93.

Another reluctant threat of force was made over human sacrifice at an interior town, Ohombele, 30 miles up the Opobo. It was not until November 1894 that the Commissioner's patience finally ran out after repeated admonitions and "friendly advice" that the practice would not be tolerated by the administration. Casement, the acting Vice Consul, was despatched with 100 men and arrested three of the main offenders at the town. According to Casement, the town "apologised and offered to pay any fine I might inflict".[1] Again it had not been necessary to fire a shot.

The one occasion where force had to be used before 1894 and which did result in bloodshed occurred on the Cross River. It was here that the Protectorate administration had penetrated further inland than anywhere else - Macdonald himself went the 250 miles up to the Rapids in November 1893[2] and there was a government post at Itu, 60 miles above Old Calabar. Naturally this sudden influx of strangers had created consternation amongst the inhabitants, who began to realize that the natural geographical communication of the Cross River made them vulnerable. Political stability on the Cross was not assisted by the fragmentary nature of government

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1. F.O. 2/64 Macdonald to F.O. 6.12.94 enc. by Casement.

2. F.O. 2/51 Macdonald to Rosebery 25.11.93. He was forced back when the river fell 9 feet in 24 hours.

along the river bank.[1] Each tribe that touched the water felt itself at liberty to tax trade passing up or down the river, and for any alleged offence could stop trade, setting off a chain reaction which was felt at Old Calabar. After several interruptions of trade, matters came to a head soon after Macdonald returned to the Protectorate in 1893. One Akpotem, a Chief residing at Okeriki, in a trade dispute with other Chiefs of his own tribe, the Akunakuna, chopped off the heads of five Afikpo traders as a way of making trouble. The local Afikpo rushed to arms and trade came to a standstill. Coco Otu Bassi, the native political agent at Itu, persuaded all concerned to lay down their arms and await the Commissioner, for whom he would send to settle the dispute. On 24th August Macdonald went up to Okeriki in a steam launch and demanded the person of Akpotem. The majority faction were prepared to comply, but a minority surrounding the chief prepared for resistance. Macdonald, allowed a month for the man to be surrendered or he would come and take him. This would, he explained, mean the shedding of innocent blood and the destruction of property. The Commissioner then returned to Old Calabar.

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1. For a detailed analysis of the various ethnic groups along the Cross River see Anene: The Boundary Arrangements for Nigeria 1884-1906 Ph.D. London 1960 cap.III.

By now, the question had become a test of the Protectorate's authority -

> "all the tribes on the Cross River were anxiously waiting to see what would happen, and several chiefs were heard to say that for many years past the Consuls had been saying what they would do and nothing had been done." 1

On 6th October Macdonald pounced, having decided that the month "had lasted long enough". Okeriki was attacked (the Commissioner having warned the people to remove the women and children) and burnt to the ground. In the process Commandant Price was killed and two Hausas of the Protectorate force wounded. The Okeriki, their fear of the Commissioner greater than their fear of Akpotem, handed over the offending chief. Macdonald wasted no time - in the presence of the Afikpo chiefs, Akpotem was hung from the nearest tree. The Commissioner's settlement of the palaver showed in the circumstances remarkable clemency. No fine was imposed and Macdonald informed the Okeriki that, if they behaved well, he would help them collect their debts from the Calabar people, so that they might begin trading again and rebuild their town. The Afikpo chiefs were allowed to keep the body for two days

> "so that they might send for all the Chiefs from the interior to show that I had kept my word to them." 2

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1. F.O. 2/51 Macdonald to F.O. 12.10.93.

2. Ibid.

When Wall went up river a month later he found everything quiet.

The role of Coco Otu Bassy was interesting. In order to relieve the load from the Vice Consuls' shoulders, particularly at the interior stations, the best educated and most influential of the local chiefs were appointed political agents.[1] They had no executive power over the people, but were in fact government employees who acted as mediators in disputes, interpreters and informers, and were paid a salary according to their usefulness and influence from £25 to £125.[2] They wore a uniform emblazoned with the royal arms and accompanied the Consular officers on their tours when the agent's home area was visited. Their pride in their position had its humorous side. One agent had been in a fight during which his uniform was ripped off him. He had managed, however, to rescue the Royal Arms badge, and otherwise stark naked, he proceeded "reverently" to carry the badge on the top of his head.[3]

In the process of civilization, law and order was obviously a binding force. A much larger European population, and a number of English speaking natives were attracted into the Protectorate, particularly to Old Calabar after 1891. The

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1. Anene: Southern Nigeria p.186 ff.
2. F.O. 83/1380 Exchequer & Audit Dept. to F.O. 15.7.95.
3. Geog. Journal Sept. 1914: Speech by Macdonald.

government needed clerks, artisans and messengers who were obtained from the Kroo Coast, Sierra Leone and Accra. This labour market was often affected by rumours of ill treatment in the Cameroons and the Congo, making Kroos particularly reluctant to ship for any port going in an easterly direction.[1] But including the Protectorate troops there were well over 1,000 Africans in the Protectorate who were governed by other than the traditional sanctions. They brought new ideas, and new demands and tended to act as a corrosive on traditional society. Many people were also attracted to Old Calabar who were not in the service of the government but hoped to gain employment either there or as advisers to the native chiefs. Those disappointed in their hopes stayed as traders or even opened shops. According to the Reverend J. Price, there was an increase in the facilities for public drinking at Old Calabar, shops opening for the sale of gin and rum.[2] Slowly and painfully the old forces of law and order were changing to be replaced by new. As Macdonald remarked "To bring the whole Protectorate under an effective government is a matter of time, money, and lives."[3] He might have added from his own store of wisdom that it was a matter of faith too.

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1. See e.g. F.O.C.P. 6351 Moor to Rosebery 24.9.92.
2. Goldie H. Calabar and its Mission p.351 ff.
3. F.O. 2/84 Macdonald to Salisbury 25.7.95.

CHAPTER NINE

FRIENDS AND NEIGHBOURS

The formal relations of the Protectorate and the colony of Lagos had their beginnings in Benin. For if the Colonial Office was not to take responsibility for the Oil Rivers, a boundary had to be demarcated. This was easier said than done. In 1886 Consul and Governor had got their lines crossed over Nana. Macdonald had added to the confusion in this report by first undermining Nana's position south of the Forcados and then advocating the extension of Lagos to the right bank. Rumours and counter-rumours were flying around the locality as a result of the Commissioner's visit, the Benin River traders being particularly unhappy about the idea of being transferred to Lagos, with the possibility of closer supervision and increased taxes.[1] Though the Foreign Office denied that there was any truth in the rumoured transfer,[2] they recognized the desirability of a boundary settlement. To this end Macdonald was authorized to discuss the question

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1. F.O.C.P. 6098 Af.Ass. to Salisbury 2.12.90. F.O.C.P. 6164 Traders of Benin to Salisbury 26.11.90. They need hardly have worried - Lagos had done nothing to make the 1886 Proclamation effective.

2. F.O.C.P. 6098 F.O. to Af.Ass. 12.12.90.

with Hemming at the Colonial Office,[1] before setting out for the coast in 1891.

It is evident that, since 1889, Macdonald's opinions regarding Lagos had undergone a change. He had not at the time been impressed with the energy of the Colonial administration, yet he had advocated their claims as far as the Forcados as a 'pis aller". By January 1891 he was having reservations

> "as to whether Benin ought to go to Lagos - eventually I should say, from us its geographical position it will have to, for the "slavery" reason alone however, it would be a mistake to hand it over just at present." 2

By the time the negotiations opened in April, Macdonald was prepared positively to advocate the claims of the Protectorate west of the delta. What was his motive for doing so is not clear. He must have been aware of the potential difficulties of a salient thrust into the western delta and separated from the larger portion of the Protectorate. The only positive clue there is comes indirectly from the report itself. He knew that if his recommendations were adopted it would mean the end of monopoly and the end of the Company. In the event of this taking place by claiming a western salient, the Protectorate was laying a prima facie claim to the delta.

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1. F.O. 84/2161 F.O. to C.O. 9.4.91. C.O. to F.O. 11.4.91.
2. F.O. 84/2111 Macdonald to Larcom 13.1.91.

There is little doubt that Macdonald went into the negotiations in April with the backing of the Benin River merchants. This was reflected in his first boundary proposal which eventually proved the basis of agreement. The line was to commence

> "at a point on the seashore 10 miles to the north west of the Benin River, and running parallel to this river at a distance of 10 miles from it until it reaches the Lagos Creek. The line should then cross the creek and follow the far or eastern banks until it reaches the Lagos Lagoon and then run due north parallel with the 5th degree of east longitude." 1

Macdonald justified pushing the colony back from the Benin River by arguing the prior claims of Hewett's treaties over the Governor's proclamation, and the fact that Lagos had done nothing to establish any administration there. Hemming did not seem to have cared very much about the Benin River. He was more concerned about the line from the Lagos Creek which cut off a considerable proportion of the Yoruba country. Since this was not Macdonald's intention he readily agreed to an amendment of the line from the Lagos Creek to follow the boundary of the Benin country, so as to include the territory within the Protectorate.[2] The accepted line was a crude and vague attempt at achieving ethnic homogeneity in the two spheres of British rule.[3] Officials were acutely aware of

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1. F.O.C.P. 6351 Macdonald to F.O. 2.5.91.
2. C.O. 147/82 F.O. to C.O. 11.5.91 Min. by A.W.L.H.
3. Prescott J.R.V. The Evolution of Nigeria's Political Boundaries Ph.D. London 1961.

its vagueness at the time.[1] The crudeness of the arrangement only became apparent later.

Having come to an arrangement as to limits of government, the two administrations settled down to a cordial, if not always easy relationship. Problems created by differences in forms of government were on the whole slow to emerge. This was partly because of the haphazard method of communication between Colonial Office and Foreign Office. The Foreign Office continued its 'policy' of forwarding only a selection of the correspondence; sending for instance the tariff changes of the Protectorate, but not the original tariff till it was pointedly asked for. There was another reason for lack of friction in the early years. In his relief at not being landed with the "pleasant colony" Meade encouraged a policy of co-operation on the part of Lagos as far as possible.[2] Co-operation bore fruit in a number of directions. Moor was allowed to recruit for the Protectorate force in Yoruba country;[3] the explorations of Gallwey in the direction of Lagos Creek answered the question of inland waterway connection to the mutual satisfaction of both governments;[4] and

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1. C.O. 147/82 F.O. to C.O. 11.7.91.
2. C.O. 147/78 F.O. to C.O. 2.6.90 Min. by R.M.
3. F.O. 83/1238 C.O. to F.O. 13.3.93.
4. Supra Cap.8.

prolonged consultation over the question of adulteration of produce enabled legislation to be enacted simultaneously in 1896.[1] In 1895 both administrations raised their duties together on liquor to prevent smuggling, in the absence of a comprehensive agreement to raise duties to a uniform level, along the whole west African coastline.

One aspect of this co-operation which did not impress Macdonald was the idea of justice prevailing in Lagos. Under Articles 61 and 62 of the 1894 Order in Council the Commissioner was empowered to transfer persons committed for trial to the nearest superior court in a British African possession provided the act was necessary in the interests of justice.[2] This was obviously the case where a British subject on a capital charge requiring trial by jury was involved. Reid, an agent of the African Association, was accused of beating one of his native servants to death, and was hauled off by the Commissioner to Lagos. The verdict of Not Guilty riled Macdonald, who felt that trial by jury was a "hollow mockery" in a place where racial feelings ran high. The jury of seven whites and five blacks split, the former for acquittal, the latter for the death sentence. The Commissioner had no doubt at Reid's guilt and even Governor Carter thought the whole

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1. Correspondence in F.O. 2/64, 2/100, 83/1374 & C.O. 147/102 passim.

2. P.C. 2/340 Africa Order in Council 1889.

thing "very disgraceful". As Macdonald remarked "Catch me bringing any more of my beauties down here for trial".[1] He never did.

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The eastern side of the Protectorate was the only area conterminous with the possessions of another European power. The Germans since 1884 despite doubts as to the permanency of their settlement, had quickly established their presence in the Cameroons.[2] Macdonald's appointment owed something to this presence - his ability to get on with Michahelles at Zanzibar had established his name at Berlin. He had a number of personal acquaintances in the German Colonial service from earlier days - people like Von Schuckmann, the Imperial secretary in the Cameroons, and Von Gravenrath, the Commandant whom he had known in Cairo[3] and his ability to converse in German made their friendship somewhat more than formal. All this was to his credit as far as Salisbury was concerned, because if there was one problem which might prove amenable to a new approach to friendly settlement, it was the question of

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1. F.O. 84/2194 Macdonald to Anderson 9.1.92.
2. F.O. 84/1882 Johnston to Salisbury 12.12.88 Anderson's verdict "on the whole the Germans have not done badly".
3. F.O. 84/2111 Macdonald to Anderson 17.12.91 P.

the boundary between the British Protectorate on the east and the German Protectorate on the West.

By 1890 the question between the British and German Governments had reached a stalemate. The only new factor to occur in the Ndian/Akpayafe controversy[1] was an agreement in 1889 to conduct a joint survey of the Rio del Rey by British and German naval officers.[2] This was long overdue. The only existing maps of the area were controversial, Johnston's of 1887 and a German one of 1889. The German map went so far as to agree with the British contention that the Akpayafe did not flow into the basin of the Rio Del Rey, but exposed other irregularities in Johnstons map. The Akpayafe was still urged however on political grounds.[3] It was on the result of the joint survey that Macdonald was to communicate with Von Soden, the Governor of the Cameroons, as soon as he had finished his investigations on the Niger-Benue.[4]

In the event the joint survey was not held. The death

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1. Supra cap.3.
2. F.O.C.P. 5945 Note Verbate by Hatzfeldt 25.7.89.
3. F.O.C.P. 5945. Hatzfeldt to Salisbury 8.6.89. Neither Johnston's nor the German map bear much resemblance to reality cf. D.O.S. Series 6762, 1:25000, 1959 et seq. Some sheets of this first edition have yet to be published.
4. F.O.C.P. 5945 F.O. to Macdonald 28.6.89.

of Commander Pullen, the Senior Naval Officer on the West coast, and irritating delays by the Admiralty combined to postpone the British effort until March 1890.[1] By then, having lost patience, the Germans had conducted their own survey in December. The question still lacked a joint authoritative basis accepted by both sides. Under the circumstances there was no point in Macdonald going to the Cameroons.

The Anglo-German agreement of 1890 therefore merely confirmed the provisional line of 1885, while recognising that there was no such river as the Rio del Rey. It was agreed that this line would be subject to rectification by agreement in accordance with local requirements and that Commissioners should meet with the least possible delay for the object of such rectification.[2]

This was the background against which Macdonald went to Berlin in September 1891, as he put it, "to grab as much as I could".[3] Von Soden was in Germany on leave, and it was decided to try and reach a settlement by direct negotiations between

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1. F.O.C.P. 5945. F.O. to Admiralty 2.12.89. F.O. 84/2019 F.O. to Macdonald 8.3.90.

2. Anglo-German agreement 1890. Articles IV and VI.

3. Geographical Journal June 1914.

the two most knowledgeable men on the spot.[1] It was Macdonald's first excursion into the realms of high diplomacy and he made the most of it. True the Ndian/Akpayafe dispute was not settled, but he gained a real point with an admission by the German Government that the Akpayafe did lie within the British Protectorate and would constitute a concession on the part of the British government.[2] Having admitted this, all sorts of concessions and arguments were placed before Macdonald to induce him to recommend the Akpayafe as a boundary, but to no avail. The German Government, therefore, insisted that, as no agreement could be reached, the position as at the 1890 agreement should be adhered to.[3] It was a complimentary recognition that Macdonald had got the better of the argument.

Macdonald returned to London in November and the old arguments were resumed through the ambassador. Macdonald's visit to Berlin had weakened the German arguments, however, and Anderson inclined to the view that once the Commissioner had settled in to his new post, and "informed", himself, it

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1. F.O.C.P. 6098 Salisbury to Beauclerk 22.7.90. F.O. 84/2032 Malet to Salisbury 6.8.90.

2. F.O. 84/2035 Trench to Salisbury 25.9.90.

3. F.O. 84/2035 Malet to Salisbury 13.10.90.

would be possible to try again to reach agreement. No one knew what impact the Macdonald administration would have on the rivers and there seemed everything to be gained by waiting.[1] To this the German Government reluctantly assented.

When Macdonald arrived in the Protectorate, the border question was noticeably quiescent and seemed likely to remain so for some time. The German Government raised no objection to his appointment as Consul to the Cameroons,[2] and Macdonald spent the first months renewing old acquaintances with Schuckmann and establishing an understanding with the new governor, Zimmerer. The tariff duly came into force, care being taken to avoid establishing any post within the disputed boundary region. The Germans generally welcomed the advent of the new administration. Since 1889 they had been complaining of the

> "flagrant violations of territory and plundering inroads of Calabar people into German possessions"

and the lack of any satisfaction from the English Consul. These complaints were not entirely unjustified. Anderson believed that the whole difficulty over the Eyo incident, when the exasperated Germans at last retaliated by seizing King Eyo and two hostages from Old Calabar in return for seven men

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1. F.O. 84/2154 Memo by H.P.A. 9.1.91.
2. F.O. 84/2129 Trench to Salisbury 13.7.91.

seized by Calabar traders from German territory,[1] arose from Hewett's neglect to answer the German Governor's letters. Macdonald was of the same opinion.[2] The advent of a formal government, particularly one with its capital so close to German territory, promised if not an end to violations, the prospect of speedy satisfaction.

In the absence of an agreed boundary, however, trouble continued to erupt at periodic intervals on the eastern side of the Protectorate. Efik traders from Old Calabar failed to comprehend that their hinterland had been partitioned between two European powers; moreover the bickering of these two powers, as to their respective jurisdictions, constituted a constant source of harassment. In November 1891, an Old Calabar chief, Ekanem Esien, who owned a plantation on the Akpayafe, was summoned to appear before a German Court set up at Oron, midway between the Ndian and Akpayafe rivers. Macdonald sent Roberts to investigate, and the latter discovered a certain Herr Clauss exercising jurisdiction on the disputed territory. Clauss accepted Roberts' protest and agreed to desist from holding his court, but refused to withdraw, until he had

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1. The German Government apologised for what was admittedly a breach of international law. Correspondence in F.O.C.P. 5945.

2. F.O.C.P. 5945 Hatzfeldt to Salisbury 25.6.89. Mins.

received instructions from the German Governor. It was December before Macdonald could find time himself to go to the Cameroons. He sailed up the Rio del Rey and what he saw confirmed his opinion that the west bank should be held on to at all costs. Beyond the mangrove swamps lay mile upon mile of oil palms and hard woods. He took on board specimens of the timber and found by comparison they were 100% cheaper than what he could buy in the Protectorate. His conversation with Schuckmann, the Acting Governor, merely confirmed the status quo. All boundary questions were allowed to stand over until Zimmerer returned from leave when, it was agreed he and Macdonald should meet in the Rio del Rey and sketch out a boundary on the spot.[1]

Before the two men could meet, the issue was immeasurably complicated by the German grant of a trade monopoly in the River to the Swedish firm of Knutson and Valdau. Macdonald objected to this on two counts. Firstly the part of the concession that was exercised west of the Ndian was undoubtedly in debatable territory. This applied to the Swedish factory itself at the head of the estuary. Secondly the monopoly seemed to be clearly inconsistent with Art. VIII of the 1885 agreement which stipulated that no differential treatment should be applied as between each other's nationals.

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1. F.O.C.P. 6351 Macdonald to Salisbury 8.12.91.

Under this clause the Swedish firm traded freely at Old Calabar. Since a monopoly forbade Old Calabar traders to trade in the Rio del Rey even on the payment of duty, Macdonald strongly protested.[1]

The British protest about the monopoly and its position on debated territory, delivered to Berlin on 5th September,[2] and the German answer on the 14th revealed a yawning gap between the two governments. The Germans denied that the concession in any way infringed the British sphere, and reiterated the right of Germany to both banks of the Rio del Rey. It was the German argument concerning the monopoly which caused most raised eyebrows. The 1885 agreement, they said, was "irrelevant". No limitation had been imposed on freedom of trade, only the right to create trading establishments by the granting of the concession. The reason for granting the concession was stated to be compensation for the sacrifices incurred by the Swedish firm in opening up the country. Since the privilege excluded both German and English traders, this was interpreted as evidence of lack of discrimination![3] Anderson's immediate reaction over the monopoly was to note

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1. F.O. 84/2195 Macdonald to Salisbury 12.7.92.
2. F.O.C.P. 6351 Malet to Rosebery 5.9.92.
3. F.O. 84/2215 Trench to Rosebery 16.9.92.

that the argument was probably worth

> "more to us than to them. We can turn this against them if they ever complain of Niger monopolies".

Lister however was strongly opposed to any concession. The claim of the Germans to land on the right bank he found inadmissable, the boundary would "be a very bad one and lead to much trouble".[1] Macdonald, home on leave, reinforced Lister's opinions by pointing out the hardships to the Efik traders at Old Calabar.[2]

"Twopenny affair"[3] it may have been, it was threatening to cause a primary disturbance in Anglo-German relations. Under these circumstances it was agreed that Macdonald should go to Berlin and for a second time endeavour to settle the eastern boundary of the Protectorate.[4] It was noticeable in the instructions given to Macdonald that the question of the monopoly had shrunk into relative insignificance. The Commissioner was not to discuss the question, but if it was raised he was merely to observe that the 1885 agreement would

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1. F.O. 84/2215 Minutes by H.P.A. and T.V.L. 26.12.92 On German Government's further note 20.12.92.

2. F.O. 2/51 Macdonald to F.O. 21.1.93.

3. F.O. 2/51 Rosebery's Opinion 27.1.93.

4. F.O.C.P. 6471 Various correspondence.

not interfere with the grant of extensive monopolies to the Niger Company. Evidently Anderson had got his way, the trading rights of the Efiks were nothing compared with the threat represented to Anglo-German good neighbourliness on the west coast by a disputed boundary.[1]

The 1893 agreement, signed on 14th April, appeared to settle very little.[2] The preamble stated quite clearly that the agreement was without prejudice to the lines laid down in 1885, 1886 and 1890. It made no attempt to settle the boundary line beyond the head of the Rio del Rey, which was still to be the provisional line of 1890. The only new feature was the starting point of this line which was to be

> "the point at the north west end of the island lying to the west of Oron where the two waterways named Urifian and Ekankan ... meet".

From the upper end of the Rio del Rey to the sea the right bank was to be the customs boundary as in the 1885 agreement. This was clarified by both sides agreeing not to erect or allow any trade settlements to exist on the Backasay peninsula, the tongue of land forming the western enclosing arm of the Rio del Rey. The omission of the word 'customs' before the signing of the agreement at the request of Macdonald and Trench altered the whole significance of the arrangement. At

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1. F.O. 2/50. Rosebery to Macdonald 13.3.93.

2. 1893 Agreement Art.I text in F.O. 2/51 Rosebery to Macdonald 8.4.93.

one stroke a practical arrangement was turned into a political definition.[1] The Backasay peninsula was effectively neutralised and German expansion limited westwards. The Akpayafe controversy was finally disposed of in favour of the British.[2] The Germans were saddled with the whole responsibility of erecting customs posts and preventing smuggling in the Rio del Rey. The British lost nothing beyond a few miles of swamp and got a good customs boundary into the bargain. The fixing of both ends of the provisional line enabled the question of adequate local demarcation to be considered.

The settlement of 1893 did not mean the disposal of all points of issue between the Protectorate and the Cameroons. Macdonald for a start took strong exception to the way in which the Cameroon authorities inaugurated their fiscal administration in the Rio del Rey. In August 1893 Wall was sent to investigate whether the Germans had set up any customs posts consequent on the agreement. His report was negative. In October however a number of the Calabar chiefs reported

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1. F.O. 64/1302 Minute by H.P.A. seems to indicate that the Germans were caught by surprise at the sudden English request and complied, although with some reluctance, without realising the full implications. Marschall did - and was annoyed. The original suggestion came from Macdonald to Rosebery F.O. 2/51 12.4.93.
The German text may be found in "Reichs Anzieger" 29.4.93.

2. F.O. 64/1302 Trench to Rosebery 15.4.93.

that their trading boys and canoes had been seized in the Rio del Rey, apparently without any warning that new customs regulations had been imposed. Various of the traders alleged brutalities in connection with the suppression of so called smuggling, notably floggings. The reports sent Macdonald hurrying to the Cameroons, where he discovered Herr Clauss busy at work as Imperial German Customs Officer. About twenty men had been seized by Clauss and these were immediately released on Macdonald offering to go guarantor. The Commissioner's opinions on these proceedings expressed in a letter to Rosebery were strong;

> "none of these people had the least idea that they were offending against the law of the whiteman, and even if they had the treatment they have been subjected to was most uncalled for, and by no means in accordance with that spirit of friendliness and mutual assistance of which so much was said during my visit to Berlin." 1

Beyond giving rein to his feelings there was little Macdonald could do but protest. The Germans were within their rights, even if Zimmerer was guilty of a breach of faith in establishing the customs posts without giving notice as promised to the British administration. The Commissioner's humanitarianism was not entirely altruistic, although he was personally revolted at Clauss's behaviour. What he feared above all else

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1. F.O. 2/51 Macdonald to Rosebery 26.11.93.

was another Brass at Old Calabar. Fortunately the Efik markets were more widely flung than the Brassmen's. Trade for a time moved away from the Rio del Rey area as Efik traders opened up new markets on the west of the Akpayafe. The Commissioner to avoid friction had printed copies of the German customs rules and tariffs circulated in English and Efik.[1]

The beginnings of a German concession policy in the Cameroons worried the Commissioner less than the delays in the carrying out of the demarcation of the provisional line on the ground. Uncertainty on this score proved more comic than serious. In 1894 the Germans set up a customs post in Ekanem Esien's town in the immediate vicinity of the provisional border. Macdonald, unable to admit that it was on German territory, protested and sent a Protectorate force of one officer and ten men to occupy the place on behalf of the British government. The two sides proceeded to stare each other out for two months before mutual good sense prevailed and a simultaneous evacuation was arranged.[2] Nevertheless, comic or not, it underlined the fact that continual disputes represented an irritant to Anglo-German relations. The time was therefore considered ripe to attempt a delimitation

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1. F.O. 2/51 Macdonald to Rosebery 26.11.93.

2. F.O. 2/64 Macdonald to F.O. 31.12.94 and Enc. F.O. 64/1367 Hatzfeldt to Kimberley 18.5.95.

commission. The initiative came from Germany who suggested on 14th December that the British Government should appoint a commissioner to delimit the boundary with a German representative as far as the rapids on the Cross River.[1]

The delimitation took place in October 1895, after Macdonald had left the Protectorate. Close, the English Commissioner, and Von Besser, his German counterpart, spent five weeks traversing the hitherto largely unexplored region between the Cross Rapids and the head of the Rio del Rey. Their report submitted in December exposed the limitations of the provisional line. Between the terminal points agreed upon in 1890 and 1893 a natural boundary was impossible to find. Therefore the Commissioners produced an elaborate compromise which swung the delimited boundary either side of the provisional line allotting one village to the Cameroons, the next to the Protectorate (this gave the British Ekanem Essien's). Close admitted the boundary was of an "arbitrary and artificial nature", but pleaded it was the best solution available. Moor was annoyed, in that no advantage had been taken to settle the boundary on natural features. Macdonald himself still adhered to the watershed proposal and doubted whether the Germans would accept the proposed boundary of the

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1. F.O. 64/1341 Note verbale by Jenisch 14.12.94.

two Commissioners.[1] The delimitation commission therefore, having cost £1,000 apiece to the two governments, failed to effect a final solution.[2]

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Macdonald's relations with Goldie began on an indifferent note, and ended in downright hostility. It was perhaps in the nature of things that relations between Company and Protectorate Administration should be difficult. The events of 1889-90 had seen the Company being put increasingly on the defensive, culminating in the collapse of the plans for chartered government for the delta and the formation of an administration which in its success (or failure for that matter) would provide a pointed contrast to Company rule. This natural antagonism was given personal point by the appointment, as the new ruler of the coastal region, of the very person who had made such a searching enquiry into the Company. Henceforward the company adopted a policy of "fight everything",[3] an attitude fully reciprocated by Macdonald.

The future spirit in which relations were to be conducted

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1. F.O. 2185 Moor to F.O. 21.12.95. Including joint report Close/Besser. Mins. on

2. The boundary was not finally settled before the western Cameroons came under British mandate in 1918.

3. F.O. 84/2181 Minute by H.P.A. 18.12.91.

was revealed over the question of boundaries. Since two boundaries, one west and one east of the delta, had to be negotiated, the problem was doubly complex compared with that of the Lagos or the Cameroons boundaries. During June 1891 Macdonald had several interviews with Goldie, each one more acrimonious than the last. One of the main points at issue was the town of Idu. Macdonald, recalling the remarks he had made in the report, insisted that Idu should be included within the Protectorate territory. Goldie equally asserted the company's rights over the town, since it lay on a key waterway giving access to the Niger and Oguta lake. Each claimed that the jurisdiction of the other over the town would lead to grave complications and neither felt able to give way. Anderson's pious hope that "they won't quarrel" seemed bound to fall at the first obstacle, when accusations of ignorance were exchanged with mutual regrets about the heated tones of the other's correspondence.[1]

To Anderson this way of conducting negotiations was intolerable.

> "I explained to them that they were altogether on a wrong tack in treating with each other as if they were representatives of two foreign countries, that they were officers administering neighbouring British protectorates and that, as regards police in their territories, were rather in the position

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1. F.O.C.P. 6451 R.N.C. to F.O. 19.6.91 with Enc. F.O. 84/2111 Macdonald to F.O. 18.6.91.

> of adjoining British countries than of France and Spain; that they had to make regulations, but with a common object." 1

With Anderson in the chair an arrangement was hammered out at the Foreign Office. On the west of the delta the boundary was to be

> "a line starting at the middle of the mouth of the Forcados River, following that river midway to the mouth of the so called Warri Creek, following that creek midway up to a point 2½ miles below the mouth of the creek leading to Oagbi and Akiabodo from where the line runs to the north east for ten miles thence to the north for 50 miles."

The Company were to move their revenue hulk in the Warri Creek not less than a mile above the point on the creek where the delimitation ended. To the east of the delta, the boundary was defined as

> "a straight line commencing at a point midway between the Nun Mouth and the mouth of the Brass River and terminating at the town of Idu; it being understood that the line shall if necessary be diverted so as to leave within the Oil Rivers Protectorate a zone of not less than three miles to the westward of the stream marked on Johnston's Map as forming a direct communication between Brass and Idu; and to leave within the Jurisdiction of the Niger Company a zone of not less than three miles to the eastward of the main stream of the Niger. This line shall be subject to further delimitation according to local requirements."

Idu was to be under joint administration pending further arrangements.[2]

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1. F.O. 84/2168 Minute by H.P.A. 2.7.91.

2. F.O. 84/2110 F.O. to Macdonald 29.7.91.

The boundary agreement bore all the marks of Anderson's determination to get a settlement at all costs. It left Goldie grumbling that he had given up everything and got nothing, it left Macdonald fretting that nothing had been done to secure to the Brass men some of their hinterland markets.[1] The boundary lines were confused and contradictory and, therefore, unworkable. This was particularly true of the eastern boundary. If the line was drawn straight there would be no access by water between Idu and Brass, except through the Company's territories; if on the other hand the line was drawn at least three miles from both the Nun and the Brass it would be far from straight. No arrangement more calculated to lead to difficulties in the existing climate of relations could have been devised than the joint administration of Idu.

Not surprisingly the boundaries when published came under fire. Protests poured in from Liverpool, Bristol and Glasgow about the cutting away of Oil Rivers markets, and the arbitrary nature of the line.[2] De Cardi trading at Bonny during the 1890's summed up the coaster's opinions of those who in the sanctity of their rooms in the Foreign Office "looked upon this part of the world as a cheesemonger would a

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1. F.O.C.P. 6351 Corres. 18/19.6.91.

2. F.O.C.P. 6351 various.

cheese".[1] From the beginning Macdonald found difficulty in working the boundary. Early in November 1891 he went to Warri to conduct a demarcation on the ground, with Wallace, now the Acting Agent General of the Niger Company. The line as laid down in the agreement ran straight through the middle of the Urhobo town of Egana and cut the Oagbi creek. The Niger Company's hulk at Gana Gana was actually to the west of this line. This the Commissioner argued was impossible as a fiscal boundary. He proposed instead that the boundary should follow the Warri to the Oagbi and up the latter to its source.[2] Goldie, however, requested that any action on demarcation should be deferred until the completion of an enquiry which the Company was making.[3]

What this 'enquiry' was soon percolated through to the Foreign Office. With the collapse of charter extension, Goldie had adopted a policy of rapid expansion into the Delta, grabbing as much as possible before the new administration could settle in. His prior activity in the region had already in the 1891 discussions enabled him to deprive the New Calabar people of their markets above Idu. During the early months of

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1. M. Kingsley West African Studies 1st Edition 1899, App.1.
2. F.O. 84/2111 Macdonald to F.O. 12.11.91 (erroneously dated 1892).
3. F.O. 84/2181 R.N.C. to F.O. 17.12.91.

1892 Goldie visited the Delta to ascertain precisely where treaties had been made, particularly in the Warri and Forcados regions, and to urge on the treaty-making process. Quite obviously in such a fluid situation the last thing he wanted was a firm demarcation.

Realizing what was going on, Macdonald telegraphed the Foreign Office, urging that the Niger Company's treaties of 1891 should not be ratified until the boundary had been settled. Anderson's reaction was a nonchalent

> "Macdonald and Goldie will probably meet on the coast and fight or make friends." 1

On 7th January the storm broke. From every part of the United Kingdom firms engaged in the West African trade protested against the handing over of the Warri and Forcados regions to the Company. A formidable newcomer to the list was Elder Dempster, the shippers, acting for the first time in complete concert with the traders.[2] Cross, the radical M.P. for Liverpool, informed Lister that "a tremendous onslaught on the Niger Company was being prepared."[3] The attacks shook the complacency of the Foreign Office sufficiently to address the Liverpool Chamber of Commerce direct. The letter sent on

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1. F.O. 84/2195 Macdonald to F.O. 2.1.92.
2. F.O.C.P. 6351 Various corres.
3. F.O. 84/2241 Minute by T.V.L. 30.1.92.

2nd February was a naively partisan statement of the Company's case. There was no intention of altering the 1886 charter; the Warri branch was within the basin of the Niger, therefore the Company's treaties were sanctioned, only the left bank of the Forcados was held by the Company, and finally by the terms of the charter perfect free trade was secured.[1]

The Chamber's answer delivered on the 27th May revealed the credibility gap between government and traders. The old arguments of monopoly were restated, coupled with a demand that the whole delta south of Onitsha should be restored to the Oil Rivers Protectorate and for publication of the Company's treaties.[2] Both demands were resisted in parliament and outside. Anderson's argument that the questions implied the "existence of a power in Her Majesty's Government they do not possess"[3] curiously ignored the powers of the Secretary of State to intervene in the Company's affairs both on general matters of policy, and, under article 13, in questions of title to territories.

The resistance of government to questions in parliament, requests for the publication of the company's accounts and

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1. R.N.C. Papers: F.O. to Liverpool Chamber of Commerce 2.2.92.

2. F.O. 84/2254 Liverpool Chamber of Commerce to F.O. 27.5.92 and 7.6.92.

3. F.O. 84/2252 F.O. to Oil Rivers Trading Co. 20.6.92.

treaties and impartial investigations into the Company's rights owed nothing to intrigue or influence but was a matter of policy. The Company had secured a vast area of Africa against the competing claims of France and Germany. It was defending its territory at no cost to the Imperial exchequer. If the Crown was to take over the territory, a large initial expenditure and a higher annual outlay would be necessary. As long as the Company could do this work, then it had to be supported. Anderson admitted that, though theoretically monopoly was impossible, practically the Company did "not make newcomers welcome". Nevertheless the benefits outweighed the disadvantages. It was the nearest the government came to condoning monopoly.[1]

Finding no change in government policy, the Liverpool traders turned to direct action. During 1892 the African Association mounted a trade war on the Niger. By trading at a loss they were able to comply with the Company's regulations and push up the price to the African producer. The Brassmen were supported in their efforts to get into the Niger, and the brief trade boom which resulted curbed their discontent. During 1892 the Niger Company's profits dropped by a third, while the exports from Brass rose from £65,000 to £104,000.[2]

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1. F.O. 84/2256 Memo by H.P.A. 8.92.

2. F.O. 83/1382 Kirk to Salisbury 25.8.95.

By June 1893 both Company and Association had had enough. In a comprehensive agreement Goldie bought up all the Association's assets on the Niger, in return for the right to appoint a director to the company, £7,500 in debentures, and 5,033 £10 shares. The company agreed to stay out of the Rivers, the Association to stay away from the Niger, and to cease public attacks on the Company.[1]

The news that the traders were coming to terms hardly surprised Macdonald and did not alter his attitude one whit. He had early realized that he was on a difficult line in fighting against the government's non intervention policy. The government's treatment of Macdonald was equivocal; a certain gingerness brought about by awareness of the fact that there was the one man who by his revelations could make life uncomfortable for the government. Thus on the one hand he was assured that no decision would be taken on the Warri boundary without his being consulted.[2] He was also asked to comment on the Niger Company's budget when Goldie sent it in ... a confidence not accorded to other opponents of the Company.[3] On the other hand his continual recommendations

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1. John Holt Papers Box 4/8 Documents on fusion with R.N.C. 1893-5 For a detailed account of the negotiations see Flint Goldie Cap.9.

2. F.O. 84/2195 Macdonald to F.O. 13.3.92. Minute by H.P.A.

3. F.O. 84/2193 H.P.A. to Macdonald 12.11.92. P.

for reform on the basis of the report were shelved and forgotten. No action was taken on his request that the Company should end its system of acting as an intermediary in the purchase of land by trading rivals.[1] Macdonald's arguments in favour of ameliorating the trading conditions of the Company for the coastal middlemen met with a blank wall of resistance from Goldie, and the Foreign Office refused to see any reason to coerce him, as the Company had not violated its charter.[2] In November 1892 the Company's attempt to enforce its duties on the provisional line led to bloodshed, when two canoes loaded with oil attempted to pass the Company's revenue hulk of Gana Gana. Shots were exchanged and a Niger Company official and a native trader were killed. Tension rose in the area, and Macdonald urged the Government to do something, as he considered the proceedings of the Company "unjustifiable and likely to lead to further bloodshed and disturbance". The people, he said,

> "cannot understand why they are not allowed to trade at their markets which have been open to them from time immemorial." 3

The Foreign Office desperately hoped that, without doing

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1. F.O. 84/2240 F.O. to R.N.C. 21.1.92. The letter was acknowledged and never referred to again.

2. F.O. 84/2259 Minute by H.P.A. 26.4.93.

3. F.O. 84/2194 Macdonald to F.O. 8.12.92.

much to influence the situation, Goldie and Macdonald would come together. The constant friction around the Forcados alone was becoming too serious to be ignored, and although Goldie was "within his rights ... it would be desirable that the dispute should be compromised."[1] With this in mind conciliation of the natives was urged on the company, and a meeting suggested with Macdonald.[2]

The confrontation between Goldie and Macdonald on 25th April, 1893, at the Foreign Office was hardly to the liking of the Foreign Office. Goldie insisted on the Company's rights in introducing its financial system into the Forcados, Macdonald said "plainly enough that he objected altogether to administration by a Chartered Company". The views were irreconcilable - they did not quarrel, but they did not agree.[3] As if to underline the differences between the two men the meeting was held against the background of the imminent sell out by the African Association and the most monster petition yet organized by the Liverpool Chamber of Commerce. For the first time the Chamber attacked the charter on a basis of principle, recommending as preliminary reforms the appointment of a Crown Commissioner in the Company's territory, the pub-

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1. F.O. 84/2194 Minute by H.P.A. 9.12.92.
2. F.O.C.P. 6351 F.O. to R.N.C. 19.12.92.
3. F.O. 84/2259 Minute by H.P.A. 26.4.93.

lication of accounts with independent audit, the abolition of export duties, and the placing of the whole delta under Macdonald.[1]

The implacable nature of the opposition evidently worried the Foreign Office. When Jones of Elder Dempster approached Lister with a suggestion to buy out the Niger Company in its administrative capacity and to put the government of the territory under Macdonald, he was not rebuffed. Instead, Lister went so far as to admit this "to be the proper solution of the question", but there were many difficulties and "I prescribe patience".[2] The government did decide to assert its control over the Company's budget, however, by limiting the amount which could be raised by revenue for three years to £90,000 per annum.[3] As Flint remarked, the restriction did nothing to relax the monopoly, since it did not limit the rate of taxation,

> "the chief value of the limitation was that it made unnecessary the tedious annual examination in detail of the company's budget, whilst also providing a gesture of control with which to confront critics." [4]

With the agreement of Goldie with the African Association,

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1. F.O. 83/1238 Liverpool Chamber to Rosebery 5.4.93.
2. F.O. 83/1243 Memo by T.V.L. 13.10.93.
3. F.O. 83/1239 R.N.C. to F.O. 4.5.93.
4. Flint Goldie P.192.

Macdonald was faced with a rapidly deteriorating situation in the rivers. Trade at Brass slumped, as the Niger Company in the absence of effective opposition methodically enforced its regulations on the boundaries. The small firms outside the African Association were too small to fill the gap at Brass and after 1894 the Company's monopoly was virtually complete on the Niger and Benue. Discontent grew as Brass canoes were stopped or fired upon, debts were repudiated by the Ijo producers, or proved impossible to collect, and food canoes bringing supplies from up country were seized.[1] A series of incidents occurred, in one of which the wife of a Brass chief was raped on board a revenue hulk by a Company clerk. On another occasion a Brass lady was beaten by the Company's beachmaster at Akassa.[2] Abandoned by their Liverpool allies, suffering from an acute sense of frustration as they saw their trade dwindling and their food supply in danger, the native middlemen began to collect their weapons and to plot another way of remedying their grievances.

Macdonald too was suffering from an acute sense of frustration. He could foresee trouble and felt himself powerless to forestall it.[3] During 1894 relations reached a new

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1. Conditions in Brass described by Kirk to F.O. 25.8.95 F.O. 83/1382.

2. F.O. 2/83 Macdonald to F.O. 4.2.95.

3. Ibid.

low as the Company began advancing again on the western side of the delta. A treaty-making expedition was sent under McTaggart which actually reached Benin City. Moor protested that the Company was taking advantage of the Protectorate's preoccupation with Nana, accused the company of violating the provisional boundary and threatened to take action against McTaggart under the Arms and Ammunition Ordinance.[1] Macdonald and Goldie met in a tense atmosphere at Brighton, against a background of threats from Moor. After some discussion, Goldie agreed to order McTaggart to retire to the Niger until the trouble with Nana was concluded, while Macdonald telegraphed to his subordinate to be "temperate in the tone of his communications with Niger Company's officers".[2] Goldie's retreat was hardly gracious however.

> "If ... the region in question is on the Niger Coast Protectorate side of the boundary line, the Commissioner's protest is superfluous; as no political action taken by the Company on that side can have any validity whatever. If, on the other hand, as there seems no reason to doubt the region in question is on the Company's side of the boundary line, the Commissioner would actually seem ... to be deprecating a forward policy of the Company in its own territory." 3

Moor in his fury at what he regarded as the Company's

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1. F.O. 2/64 Moor to F.O. 21.10.94.
2. F.O. 83/1316 Memo by H.P.A. 8.10.94.
3. F.O. 83/1316 R.N.C. to F.O. 19.10.94.

attempt to force the issue over the provisional boundary, was determined not to take McTaggart's expedition lying down. Despite Macdonald's plea that both sides to the dispute should take up the positions they held prior to McTaggart's expedition, the Foreign Office had not nullified the treaties he had made.[1] These included several in the rich Urhobo markets which fed Benin and Warri. Therefore, as soon as Nana was disposed of, Moor authorized Gallwey to go ahead with his own expedition. Between September 1894 and June 1895 13 treaties were made in Urhobo country, at least five of which duplicated McTaggart's.[2] Macdonald made no attempt to restrain his subordinate, himself complaining about another official of the Company, Zweifel, who was busy making treaties at the back of Opobo. If this was going to be allowed, argued the Commissioner, the Company might just as well be saddled with the coastal districts as well.[3] Goldie strongly objected to Gallwey's treaties, on the grounds that they were within the Company's territory.[4] The Foreign Office succeeded in fanning the flames by publishing a map which purported to lay down the

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1. F.O. 2/64 Macdonald to F.O. 12.10.94.
2. F.O. 2/167 and 2/168 Passim.
3. F.O. 2/83 Macdonald to F.O. 3.5.95.
4. F.O. 83/1377 R.N.C. to F.O. 11.4.95.

provisional boundary. By mistake, the town of Warri had been placed under the jurisdiction of the Company. The Liverpool Chamber of Commerce caustically suggested that "Her Majesty's Government should issue a reliable map of the district."[1]

Unable to decide between the conflicting claims and squabbles "creditable to neither party",[2] the Foreign Office referred the question of the Forcados boundary to Kirk and ordered a standstill on treaty making.[3] Kirk's report on the boundary, received on 29th July, did little to elucidate the question. By agreement with Macdonald and Wallace, the line was straightened to run along the middle of the Forcados as far as the point 2½ miles below Oagbi, thus turning to the south of Warri; but the line from there was not touched, Kirk believing that a final settlement should await the time

> "when the geography of the Sobo and Assay markets is better known and the relations of the tribes and their trade markets better understood." [4]

If Kirk was right, he scarcely improved the situation in the short term. Moor, on taking over from Macdonald, continued to squabble with Goldie until the abrogation of the charter.

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1. F.O. 83/1376 Liverpool Chamber to F.O. 19.3.95.
2. F.O. 2/83 Minute by K. 16.6.95.
3. F.O. 2/83 F.O. to Macdonald 24.4.95. F.O. 83/1377 F.O. to R.N.C. 24.4.95. The treaties already made were not disallowed.
4. F.O. 83/1380 Kirk to F.O. 30.6.95.

The constantly erupting dispute over boundaries was exacerbated by two issues, liquor and firearms. Goldie made much of the fact that the revenues of the Protectorate relied heavily on drink, whereas in nine tenths of the company's territory the liquor traffic was banned. He also maintained that liquor was smuggled into the Company's territories from the coast areas, because the Company consistently refused to lower its tariffs.[1] What he chose to ignore was that if smuggling did take place over the customs frontier, it was into the one tenth where liquor traffic was permitted anyway, and was carried on by the Company, which itself imported over 300,000 gallons during 1893.

The question of firearms was more serious, as it involved the carrying out of the Brussels Act, and the responsibility for disorders within the area of the Niger/Benue and the coast region. The difference between Macdonald and the company was simple. The Commissioner admitted there were many arms of precision introduced into and sold in the Protectorate before 1891, and that some of these were involved in a two way smuggling process across the Niger Company's frontier. The natives in both Protectorates, he argued in 1895, had in their possession a number of rifles, and rifles had been sold

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1. R.N.C. Papers I Special Notice to Shareholders 16.3.95.

in the Niger Company's territories some time after the granting of the Charter. Since 1891, however, no rifles had been imported into the Protectorate. Goldie denied that any rifles had crossed the Company's frontier into the Protectorate, and that any had been imported by the Company since 1886, and further said that the trade in arms of precision had continued since 1891 into the territory under the Commissioner.[1] It was an argument which threatened to become more and more unprofitable - both were partly right, neither could be absolutely sure that rifles were not being imported under the nose of both Company and Consul. In an atmosphere of mutual distrust the innuendo and the half truth were given more credence than they deserved; as Hill remarked "There is no love lost between the two administrations."[2] It was a realistic if tardy assessment by government.

One solution which was proposed to overcome the accusation of smuggling and the trading restrictions created by having two different administrations side by side was a customs union. This proposal was adopted with enthusiasm by the Liverpool Chamber of Commerce during 1894.[3] Macdonald was

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1. A typical piece of correspondence may be found in F.O. 2/83 Macdonald to F.O. 17.4.95. With encs.

2. F.O. 2/83 Minute by Hill 27.5.95.

3. F.O. 64/1346 Liverpool Chamber of Commerce to F.O.

cautiously in favour although he did not think the Company would "quite tumble to it".[1] His assessment of Goldie's reaction to a suggested undermining of his monopoly was right. The latter, far from arguing the increase in trade and the saving of costs from a union, postulated the great differences between the two territories as necessitating a greater divergence of customs rates. It was the misfortune of the Niger territories, that it could not bear a higher rate, since urgent revenue was needed to open up the vast areas of Inner Africa.[2] It would not be unreasonable, he suggested, if the tariff of the territories was one hundred times that of the Coast Protectorate, since the latter consisted of half a dozen estuaries covering 20,000 square miles, and the former an inland area out of reach of the navy of 500,000 square miles.[3] If they did not agree with the sentiments, yet again the Foreign Office found it easier to agree with Goldie and do nothing.[4] There seemed little reason to intervene between the Company and its imperial mission.

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1. F.O. 83/1312 Macdonald to Hill 25.6.94.
2. F.O. 83/1312 Goldie to Hill 23.6.94. P.
3. R.N.C. Papers I Goldie: Concise Memo on suggested customs union 6.3.95.
4. E.g. F.O. 83/1312 Answer to question by Lawrence in Commons 26.6.94.

CHAPTER TEN.

CRISES.....AND A NEW COURSE.

It was perhaps no coincidence that the first major military campaign within the Protectorate took place while Macdonald was home on leave in 1894. Moor's martial instincts, his rashness and lack of patience with his Chief's policy have already been noted.[1] They were qualities which were shown to the full as Moor proceeded to precipitate a crisis with Nana on the Benin River.

Under the new dispensation relations between Nana and the Protectorate administration were bound to be uneasy. Nana "stood for a system based on power, wealth and slavery; the new order stood for a system which, while directed towards increasing the wealth available, sought to make itself, the only, or, at least the ultimate, power in the whole of the Protectorate".[2] He was by far the most powerful of the Itsekiri middle-men, his influence extending into the heart of the Urhobo markets. Hardly had Gallwey taken up his post at Benin River when he was inundated with complaints from the European

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1. Supra, cap 8.

2. Ikime, O. Niger Delta Rivalry 1969, p.100

traders. The continual quarrels of the Itsekiri middlemen with both the Urhobo oil producers and the Oba of Benin over trade and trust kept bringing trade to a standstill. The commercial uncertainty created by the Niger Company's encroachments in the Forcados tended to exacerbate conflicts. In all these disputes the future of Nana loomed large by reason of his power and influence. To meet the changed conditions of trade, which had rendered the position of the middlemen more precarious, Nana had endeavoured to strengthen his monopoly. According to Egharevba he had tried to control all Itsekiri trade with Benin, using his monopoly of cooking salt from the pans around Ebrohimi as a means of bringing pressure.[1] In Urhobo country he created a "Scientific Frontier" about 3 miles from the waterside and established himself over a large area, "forbidding the Sobos passing the line." and threatening all those who attempted to take their trade elsewhere with punishment.[2] As incidents multiplied between Urhobo producers and Nana, rival Itsekiri traders joined the European agents in urging that the real cause of commercial uncertainty in the Benin district was Nana's monopoly.

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1. Egharevba J. A Short History of Benin 3rd Ed. Ibadan 1960, p.5.

2. F.O. 2/63 Macdonald to Hill 11.8.94. enc. Coxon to Pinnock.

Gallwey, at first, did not swallow the traders' line whole. In his annual report for 1892 he gives five reasons for the uncertainty of trade in the Benin district; the predominating influence of Nana; the continued petty quarrels that occurred between the middlemen and producers; the fetish rule of the King of Benin; the inability of the native to understand the varying price of products in the home market; and the establishment of factories by the white traders up country. According to him Nana was already adjusting to the new administration. "He naturally found it very hard at first to relinquish so much power, but he is a fairly sensible man and clearly sees that to thwart the aims of the Government is very foolish policy." [1] What infuriated Gallwey was to discover that his own assessment was wishful thinking. A series of incidents during 1893 clearly illustrated that for the ordinary people Nana was still the final authority in the land, and not the British administration. One of Nana's men refused to obey a consular summons on the grounds that Nana had not told him to; another refused to sell provisions to Gallwey unless Nana gave him permission.[2]

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1. F.O. 2/51 Macdonald to Rosebery, 12.1.93.

2. F.O. 2/64 Gallwey to Nana 1.12.93.

An understandable relation between master and servant was turned into an insult against the representative of Her Majesty. As tension mounted between Gallwey and Nana, rival traders took the opportunity of creating disturbances, knowing that such were likely to be blamed on the powerful Itsekiri chief. Gallwey himself began to believe all he was told by the European traders and Nana's chief Itsekiri rival Dogho. Thus, although he had no evidence to support the charges, Gallwey accused Nana ~~with~~ of "spreading lies about the Government" and "with injuring trade."[1]

No progress could be expected while Nana continued to defy the government, which was being openly insulted by the Itsekiri Chief.[2] Coxon expressed the general consensus that Nana was "a d---d rascal!. I shan't be sorry when his power is completely broken. We will have much better trade and more profitable too."[3]

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1. F.O. 2/64 Gallwey to Nana, 1.12.93. How true this was is indicated by the trade figures for the Benin River in the year in which the crisis came to a head. Imports rose from £28,711. 10. 7d. to £84776.6.6d., exports from £22139. 10. 4d. to £100,411, 16.0. Nana's monopoly hardly brought trade to a standstill. Ann. Report 1893/4: F.O. 2/63.

2. See particularly F.O. 2/63 Ann. Report for Benin in Macdonald to Kimberley, 19.8.94.

3. F.O. 2/63 Macdonald to Hill 11.8.94. Enc. Coxon to Pinnock, 1.7.94.

Macdonald was not convinced that the time for action had yet come. The traders' accounts were "somewhat highly coloured".[1] Time must be given to the middlemen chiefs to adjust to the loss of their prescriptive rights. This required tact, even in the fact of present inconvenience to the government. He personally believed that Nana was "clever enough to know that any attempt at setting up his own authority against that of Her Majesty's government would end in disaster."[2] The administration must not be diverted from its policy of peaceful penetration by the agitations of traders. Nevertheless the Commissioner, as a gentle but salutary reminder to the Itsekiri chief wrote him a personal letter informing him that the British administration was fully established, and that Nana should no longer regard himself as 'Governor' of the Benin River but as head of his house only.[3]

In May Macdonald want on leave and Moor took over. Gallwey immediately found himself with a sympathetic ear at Old Calabar and matters quickly came to a head. The drop in palm oil prices in

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1. Ibid.

2. F.O. 2/84 Macdonald to Salisbury, 25.7.95.

3. F.O./64 Macdonald to Nana April 1894. Lloyd states (West Africa, June 1957, p.609) that Nana's office had ceased with the appointment of Gallwey in 1891. Neither Macdonald nor Nana saw things in this light.

Europe during 1894 caused the European traders to band together to depress prices on the coast. Nana refused to accept the price offered and retaliated by stopping trade. This brought Moor hot foot to Benin River on 21st June. He rapidly came to the conclusion that this state of affairs was "owing principally to the acts of the people of Chief Nana in seizing Sobo people and generally terrorizing the locality of the Ethiope River."[1] Moor, therefore, invited the Chief to attend the Vice Consulate to answer charges. Nana urged family distress and offered to send a substitute. Moor, convinced the excuses were spurious, wrote the Chief a letter ordering him to withdraw his people from the Ethiope River where disturbances were being caused, and to hand over the Sobo people seized at the Vice Consulate. He was given fourteen days to carry this out.

On 9th July Moor returned to Benin River with a small Protectorate force, and claiming his orders had not been carried out, he forbade Nana to trade on the Ethiope River, and established a blockade at its mouth. At the same time he sent for reinforcements, and a gunboat to be present at Benin Consulate for a meeting of all the chiefs of the district on 2nd August. By now Moor was determined at the very least on a show of force to

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1. F.O. 2/63 Moor to F.O. 6.8.94.

meet the situation. By the end of July a total of three officers and 87 men and H.M.S. Alecto were in attendance.

At the meeting on the 2nd August all the chiefs with the exception of Nana were present. Nana had written to Moor saying he was afraid to attend the meeting as he had heard rumours that he would be seized and deported like Ja Ja.[1] The Acting Commissioner's warlike preparations evidently produced a healthy distrust of promises of safe conduct from that source. Again he offered to send a substitute and again Moor refused, saying that if Nana wished to make his peace he must come in person. The purpose of the meeting soon became clear to the assembled chiefs. They were asked to ratify the contention that trade was open to all by signing a new treaty of the standard type including the free trade clauses. A general amnesty of past offences was offered to all who signed, and faithfully observed its terms for the future. The replacement of the original treaty signed by Nana alone was intended to undermine his paramountcy. All the local Rulers signed, and Moor sent a copy to Nana informing him he could do the same - but only at the Vice Consulate. Learning that Nana had erected a

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1. F.O. 2/64 Nana to Moor, 23.7.94.

barrier across the mouth of the creek leading to Ebrohimi, Moor ordered him by letter to remove it at once or face serious consequences. Until he complied with the orders of the Government, the letter concluded, he was to consider his town under blockade and his people banned from any of "the waterways of the Benin or Warri districts". If they attempted to trade their goods would be seized and forfeited, and if canoes failed to stop they would be fired upon". [1] Nana's reply played into Moor's hands. He insisted that the barrier had been there from his father's time as a defence against rival Itsekiri traders, and added that if he saw Government launches anywhere in the creek he would regard this as a declaration of war.[2] Moor immediately requested Captain Heugh of 'Alecto' to blow up the barrier during the course of which operation the party of marines was fired upon. As far as Moor was concerned this act "materially changes the aspect of affairs." He proposed now, should the chief submit, to impose a fine of £500 and demand the surrender of all arms and ammunition which the chief would not be entitled to have under the Ordinance.[3]

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1. F.O. 2/64 Moor to Nana, 2.8.94.

2. F.O. 2/64 Nana to Moor 4.8.94.

3. F.O. 2/63 Moor to F.O. 6.8.94.

The news of these events dropped like a bombshell on the Foreign Office desks. Macdonald, in the absence of information from the coast,[1] was as baffled as the rest at the apparent dramatic change in the peaceful course hitherto steered by the Protectorate. There seemed nothing to be done, once shots had been fired, but to let Moor have his head and see the matter through. Whether by accident or design, Moor won himself a free hand to carry out the ensuing military campaign.

He took full advantage of it. Every nerve was bent to justify military action against Nana. All disturbances in the districts were attributed to his influence, and sickening atrocities were said to have been carried out daily in his town. In his fanaticism, Moor happily confused Urhobo, Ijo and Itsekiri, and piled contradiction upon contradiction

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1. This question is interesting. The first the F.O. knew of any crisis on the coast was a letter from the Admiralty 27.7.94 transmitting a telegram from Heugh that he was on his way to Benin at the urgent request of Moor because of a threatened disturbance between the natives. Moor's first despatch of 6th August could not have arrived in England until the first week in September. He did not telegraph until 11th August, i.e. nearly two months after the June exchanges between himself and Nana. Did Moor deliberately delay information until matters had gone too far because he feared Macdonald's intervention against a forward policy? It is certainly very curious that he should have allowed shots to be fired before informing his superior.

in his endeavour to prove that every local defiance of the Protectorate administration was inspired by Nana. He saw nothing irreconcileable in claiming that the Urhobo chiefs were awaiting liberation from Nana's tyranny, at the same time as he was insisting that acts of insubordination by the same chiefs amounted to a demonstration in his favour. The real justification for the war he revealed in one crucial sentence "It has too long been the custom of the people of Benin and Warri districts to say that they know no Government but Chief Nana and it has now become necessary to convince them to the contrary".[1]

Despite the fact that Nana began to plead for a settlement Moor pushed on his military preparations. Nana still could not see his way to fulfill the one essential condition as far as Moor was concerned - attendance at the Vice Consulate. By 19th August Moor had become convinced that a greater force was necessary, and asked for another gunboat and a nine pounder field piece.[2] If this did not overawe Nana then active operations would have to be undertaken and Nana departed from the district.[3]

On 25th August all hope of a peaceful settlement

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1. F.O. 2/63 Moor to F.O. 9.8.94.
2. F.O. 2/63 Moor to F.O. 19.8.94.
3. F.O. 2/63 Moor to F.O. 22.8.94.

disappeared. A reconnoitring party sent from 'Alecto' to probe the defences of Nana's town was forced back with some casualties. One blue-jacket was killed and two Protectorate officers severely wounded. Moor decieided that at least two more gunboats would be needed and these were at once sent for. By the 18th September the largest force ever gathered in the Bights was assembled - 350 troops and marines backed by four gunboats (the entire naval strength on the West Coast) under the supreme commander on the station, Rear - Admiral Bedford. Nana's abject plea for peace "Please forgive me, I don't want to fight the government"[1] was summarily rejected by Moor, who was determined to restore the image of the Protectorate tarnished by the failure of 25th August.

The end followed swiftly. After increased bombardment an overwhelming attack was launched at 5.30 on the morning of 25th September. By 9.a.m. Ebrohimi had been taken. Inside the town the attackers discovered some 8,300 cases of gin and an arsenal consisting of 106 cannon 445 blunderbusses, over 1000 cap guns, 640 Daneguns, a machine gun and nearly 15 tons of

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1. F.O. 2/64 Moor to F.O. 5.10.94.

gunpowder but no Nana.[1] He had made good his escape, although his personal belongings were captured on 28th. The Protectorate lost three men killed and over 76 wounded.[2] This was not the full extent of the direct cost to the Protectorate of Moor's ambitions. In 1896 the Admiralty sent in a bill for £7000, which after much pleading was reduced to a contribution of £2000 from the Protectorate.[3]

If Nana had conceived all along of a way to embarrass the administration at the hands of which he had been used so hardly, he could not have done better than to turn up in Lagos. For his presence there demonstrated, as nothing else could, the legal awkwardness of having two totally different British administrations side by side. In view of the problems of dislocation consequent upon the defeat of Nana, and frustrated at being kept so much in the dark by Moor, Macdonald suddenly cut short his leave and left for the coast on 13th October. His arrival at Lagos coincided with Nana's surrender to the British authorities. A ludicrous situation at once arose. Governor Carter

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1. F.O. 2/64 Moor to F.O. 5.10.95
2. F.O. 2/64 Moor to F.O. 20.10.94
3. F.O. 2/99 F.O. to Moor, 11.5.96.

informed Macdonald that he could not surrender Nana without a warrant. The Commissioner hurried to Forcados, procured the necessary document and returned to Lagos. The Governor then stated that his judicial authorities were of opinion that Nana could not be surrendered to the Protectorate, because he was a Lagos British subject, his town being on the right bank of the Benin River, which bank was the boundary proclaimed by Moloney in 1886. To the Commissioner's utter amazement the Governor then stated that "Chief Nana could bring an action against the Protectorate for the acts of hostility which that Government had carried on against him and....that, if such an action were brought Nana would win his case."[1]

With incredible inefficiency the Lagos Government had completely neglected to proclaim the boundary of 1891, and had pigeon holed and forgotten the despatch from the Colonial Secretary, which had laid down the new arrangement. With some difficulty the erring despatch was brought to light, and the legal difficulties as far as Nana was concerned were overcome when the Chief voluntarily gave himself up to Macdonald.[2]

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1. F.O. 2/64 Macdonald to Kimberley, 12.11.94.

2. Ibid. Kimberleys comment "There is something inexpressibly absurd in this difficulty about giving up or even arresting a Chief who has been engaged in a serious conflict with British Forces". For the Lagos view C.O. 147/96 Carter to C.O. 19.11.94.

This was something of a relief to the Commissioner who was averse to a trial in Lagos for two reasons, his own previous experience and the presence of native lawyers ready to make a rich picking off the prisoner. More particularly, he was well aware of the weakness of the case against Nana. This appeared in the trial in December at Old Calabar. It was a brief affair characterised as much by the unscruplous determination of Moor, the chief prosecutor, to secure a conviction, as by anything else. Macdonald, sensing the difficult position in which he had been left by his subordinate, barely spoke throughout the trial, unable to confirm or deny the truth of the course of events since May. Nana was duly convicted on the grounds that he had violated his treaty with Britain (in what way was not stated) and was deported to the Gold Coast on an allowance of 10/- per day.[1]

In contrast to the fall of Ja Ja, there were no misgivings in the Foreign Office about the deportation of Nana. If the necessity for a campaign was regrettable, the end result had been to remove an obstacle to hinterland penetration. It was only

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1. An account of the trial is given in 2/64. In 1906 Nana was permitted to return and granted an allowance of £10 a month for two years. He died in 1916. A full account of his life and its significance in terms of Itsekiri - Urhobo relations, may be found in Ikime: "Merchant Prince of the Niger Delta" 1967 and "Niger Delta Rivalry" 1969.

Macdonald's method applied in a more violent way, and with apparently quicker if more expensive results. The possibility of Nana's cause being taken up was therefore dismissed by Kimberley.[1]

In fact Macdonald was left with two headaches. The first was Lagos. The Nana episode had at last aroused the slumbering apathy of the colony. Even when confronted with the Colonial Secretary's letter, Carter made difficulties about proclaiming the boundary. His main contention was that "the Benin river was the natural boundary of Lagos"; any other boundary would require an expensive survey. This would be unnecessary assuming that in time, the Protectorate would be administered from the Colonial Office.[2]

Carter's argument produced a different response at the Colonial Office from what it would have done in 1891. The new attitude reflected a changing awareness of imperial responsibilities which was to receive even greater impetus when Chamberlain became Colonial Secretary. It was an awareness which argued that the rule of subject territories was neither the province of private imperialists like Goldie, nor the task of the Foreign Office. From

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1. 2/64 Macdonald to F.O. 13.12.94 Min. by Kimberley.
2. C.O. 147/96 Carter to C.O. 19.11.94.

the middle of 1894 onwards, the Colonial Officials began to look with increasingly critical eyes on the way the Foreign Office was running the Coast Protectorate. Hemming, the head of the West Africa department, was the arch exponent of the new philosophy. He entirely concurred with Carter that the Protectorate should be under the Colonial Office, and was prepared to await further elucidation as to the Governor's reluctance to proclaim the boundary.[1] Carter did not disappoint him. All sorts of reasons were now urged against the 1891 boundary. The time was inopportune for proclamation; in the absence of a survey the boundary could not be ascertained; a conference ought to be held to lay down a line intelligible to all.[2] Armed with the Governor's memorandum, the Colonial Office suggested to the Foreign Office that Carter and Macdonald should meet at Benin River and discuss the matter.

The reopening of the boundary question was hardly welcome to the Foreign Office and even less welcome to Macdonald. Neither had thought that colonial incompetence would be used as an excuse to

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1. C.O. 147/96 Carter to C.O. 19.11.94. Min. by A.W.L.H.
2. C.O. 147/96 Carter to C.O. 21.11.94.

go back on an agreed arrangement.[1] Nevertheless a conference, it seemed, could do no harm if a settlement agreeable to both sides could be reached. Unfortunately no such settlement proved possible. Macdonald insisted on the proclamation of the 1891 arrangement since the territory in dispute was not in a fit state to form part of a colony,[2] Carter equally refused to budge over the agreed boundary, believing it to be unworkable, and took the offensive by suggesting that the whole Protectorate should be taken over by the Colonial Office. Hemming agreed, believing the administration was "entirely beyond the business and capabilities of the F.O." Determined to drag his feet, he suggested a continuation of the conference between Carter and Macdonald at the Foreign Office.[3] The conference was in fact not held, since the Colonial Office suggested that Carter should visit Benin first and make himself acquainted with the matter.[4] An impasse had thus been reached in the question when Moor took over the Protectorate. The boundary was in

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1. F.O. 83/1319 C.O. to F.O. 28.12.94. Mins on

2. F.O. 2084 Memo by Macdonald, 9.9.95.

3. C.O. 147/102 F.O. to C.O. 17.9.95.

4. F.O. 83/1384 C.O. to F.O. 7.10.95.

fact never settled before the amalgamation of 1906 made it unnecessary. The important point to note here is that, even before the advent of Chamberlain the Colonial Office had begun to mount a campaign, unanswerable in the long run, against the concept of the Foreign Office Protectorate.

The second legacy of the Nana dispute was the immediate effect, within the Protectorate, of the military campaign. The danger was considerable that three years work in the building of confidence and goodwill might have been destroyed. The gains up to 1894 were exemplified by the fact, that during August and September, when most of the Protectorate forces were in the Benin River, none of the other city states had seized the opportunity to make trouble. But when Macdonald reached the Urhobo country during the latter months of 1894, the disturbed nature of the district clearly indicated that the fall of Nana had left a power vacuum which the Protectorate administration had hardly begun to fill. The Commissioner decided on an extensive goodwill tour throughout the Protectorate, in a bid to allay apprehensions and sympathies for the deported chief, whose slaves and property had been confiscated. Between 8th and 22nd of November Macdonald held meetings at Sapele, Bonny, Opobo, Warri, Brass, Degema and Old Calabar, as he put

it, to consult and explain. He left no account of what was said at these meetings, although by the turn of the year he was able to report that all was quiet in the Protectorate.[1] It was the lull before the storm. On 30th January, whilst inspecting the plant at Opobo, Macdonald received a telegram from Harrison, the Acting Vice Consul at Brass. It read "Akassa attacked. Canoes (forty or fifty) returned last night. Factories and Consulate defenceless".[2]

The one place that Macdonald visited in November 1894 where discontent was rife was Brass. Trade was by then at a standstill, the Niger Company having blockaded all the creeks to the markets.[3] The sense of frustration was deepened by the Consul General's apparent inability to do anything for the Brassmen - a helplessness virtually admitted by Macdonald whilst on tour.[4] Williams, the Church Missionary Society pastor, explained that as a result of the trade blockade practically all his congregation of 250 had returned to ju ju. More and more of the influential men lost faith in the white man's God,

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1. F.O. 2/83 Macdonald to F.O. 14.1.95.
2. F.O. 2/83 Macdonald to F.O. 4.2.95.
3. F.O. 83/1374 Steinberg & Co. to F.O. 4.2.95.
4. F.O. 2/83 Macdonald to F.O. 4.2.95.

who had allowed them to be oppressed[1] and joined Koko, the leader of the ju ju party. In December the last straw was an outbreak of small-pox which carried off the old King Ebefa, ~~and~~ the leader of the Christian party. Koko became King and demanded human sacrifices and cannibal rituals to forestall the disease.

Poverty, starvation and disease brought together all natives in Brass, including the remnants of the Christian group, in utter desperation. It was resolved to attempt the amelioration of their lot by one nihilistic act of violence against the Company's trading headquarters at Akassa. There was no intention of rebelling against the Protectorate, as the Brassmen expressed in a heartrending cri de coeur to Macdonald:

> "And Consul after Consul, our late Chiefs, and King Ockiva repeatedly spoke about this Niger Company's matter, and were offered to be patient. And we were in this state according to your orders. In your time also we were asked to do so. The ill-treatments of the Niger Company is very bad. They said that Brassmen should eat dust. According to their saying we see truly that we eat the dusts. Our boys fired, killed and plundered, and even the innocent provisions sellers were captured and killed likewise. If the Queen of England was acting in like manner as the Niger Company the whole of Africa would have been dead through starvation. We did not kill the Queen's men at all from the beginning of the establishment of this Brass River. But being they are the Queen's men nothing such acted. Being the Company is not the Queen's men - and instead of we Brass people die through hunger we had rather go to them and die in their swords." [1]

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1. F.O. 2/83 Macdonald to F.O. 4.2.95.

2. F.O. 2/83 Kings & Chiefs of Brass to Macdonald, 4.2.95.

If die some would, others might live to see the Niger Company "eat dust".

The attack was organized in almost complete secrecy. By Monday 28th January[1] all was ready, canoes were repaired and moved into formation, guns were issued, cannon mounted and soon well over 100 warriors were assembled, ready to move down the creeks to Akassa. In the meantime someone in the European community had guessed something was "brewing, as the natives had drawn all their credit balances at the different factories within the previous few weeks." [2] Late on the Sunday evening, 27th, Harrison received an anonymous letter "Brass people leaving tomorrow at noon to destroy Niger Company's factories and lives at Akassa, on Tuesday morning. Be sure you send at once to stop them. An 'Observer".[2]

Harrison, having no force at his disposal, could hardly stop the Brassmen, but he did send the letter through the creeks to Flint, the Company's Agent General, who happened to be at Akassa. But Flint was sceptical."These fumours are generally in evidence at this time of year....but, for an armed force to leave Brass to attack an adjoining friendly government

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1. For some unknown reason Flint in Goldie has got the wrong month (Dec.) of the wrong year (1894) for the attack.

2. F.O. 2/83 Harrison to Macdonald, 5.2.95

without your knowledge I can scarcely deem credible."[1] Thus, although he had twenty-one hours warning before the attack, Flint did nothing to defend Akassa and was caught virtually unprepared.

The attack was a complete success. Aided by mist, the Brassmen slid into Akassa virtually unnoticed at half past four on the morning of the 29th. The Krooboys and native employees were either butchered in their beds or reserved for a slower fate at Nembe. Some succeeded in fleeing into the bush. The Europeans had a providential escape when the mail steamer 'Bathurst' arrived and the Brassmen drew off, alleging this was a Queen's ship and they had no quarrel with the Queen. This enabled Flint and the others to get on board the only launch which had steam up and escape up river. The station was then completely looted. Cases of gin and bales of cloth were loaded into the canoes, the warehouses were then torn down. Anything not movable was smashed with crowbars and hammers - the workshops machinery and the engines of the steamers getting particular attention. Every building was burnt or wrecked and the Company's records destroyed. About £2000 in specie was taken from the safe before the Brassmen decamped with their booty and prisoners

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1. F.O. 2/83. Flint to Harrison 28.1.95.

and returned to Nembe early on 30th "with much tom-tomming and firing of guns."[1] Most of the seventy odd prisoners were killed and eaten in an endeavour to stop the small pox epidemic. About twenty five were however saved by the Christian party under Chief Warri, who refused to take part in the cannibalistic orgy and smuggled their prisoners to the Vice Consulate.

As soon as he received the news from Harrison, Macdonald hurried to Old Calabar, picked up all the available troops (about seventy) and artillery, and was back in the Brass River on the 'Evangeline' by 1 p.m. on 2nd February. The European factories and Consulate were at once put into a state of defence, and Macdonald called upon the Brassmen to surrender and he would secure them a fair trial. Already, however, the matter was moving out of the sole control of the Commissioner.

Perhaps as nothing else could have done, the attack by the Brassmen on Akassa focused public attention on the anomalies of government in the Niger Delta. Within days the Foreign Office was being inundated with requests for information, the reasons for the revolt and the necessary remedies from bodies

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1. F.O. 2/83 Macdonald to Foreign Office, 21.2.95.

great and small, trader and missionary, influential and otherwise.[1] More important, the attack induced a fundamental reappraisal in Foreign Office thinking. Kimberley was the first to strike at the heart of the matter: "the most serious part.....is the (apparently) total absence of any attempt to remove an undoubted grievance well known to ~~the~~ and acknowledged by Macdonald. Has no report been made to the F.O. on this subject, and if so where any steps taken?" - a question which provoked a chastened Anderson to admit the responsibility of the government; "the root of the trouble is that the main Niger and the Brass outlet should never have been under separate administrations with distinct fiscal systems."[2]

Thus, when Goldie had recovered from temporary stupefaction at the news from the Niger, ("We always looked on Akassa as being as safe as Piccadilly")[3] and roared into the attack, he found to his indignation that it was he and not the Brassmen, who was in the dock. Public sympathy rallied to the underdog from all sides; the Liverpool newspapers accused the Company of "flooding its territories with spirits

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1. See particularly F.O. 83/1374.
2. F.O. 2/83 Macdonald to F.O. 4.2.95 Mins. on.
3. F.O. 83/1374 Goldie to Hill, 1.2.95.

and murdering natives." The Liverpool Chamber of Commerce, and the Aborigines Protection Society delivered weighty memorials against the Company's policy;[1] and M.P.'s of all parties led by Dilke, Lawrence, Baden Powell and Bayley worried the government as to what they proposed to do to relieve the Brassmen's distress.[2]

To Goldie this was incomprehensible. The attack of the Brass people was the act of cannibals prompted by a sole desire for loot. The Company's property had been destroyed and its servants murdered in cold blood. More had been gained in a few hours looting than could be got in years of honest trade. If the Brassmen had no quarrel with the British Government, he did not doubt that the British Government had a quarrel with the Brassmen and that it was the duty of all to "exterminate Nimbe, a nest of pirates."[3]

Goldie was particularly angry with the Protectorate officials whom he considered ought to have prevented the disaster,[4] and were now using the affair

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1. Liverpool Daily Post, 5.3.95.
2. Hansard IV series Vols. XXX and XXXI contain on average a question a week throughout the session.
3. F.O. 83/1374 Goldie to F.O. 8.2.95.
4. R.N.C. Papers IV Goldie to Scarbrough, 2.2.95.

to try and dispose of the Company. Moor, on leave in England, had already told Hill that he considered the Brassmen "not much to blame".[1] Macdonald having had "the unpleasant duty" of listening to the complaints of the Brassmen for three and a half years "without being able to gain for them any redress", did all he could to pacify the Brassmen and persuade them to submit and therefore avoid the need of a punitive expedition. This provoked a quarrel with Goldie which touched the depths of bitterness. Macdonald was in no doubt that the reasons for the attack were "deprivation of markets causing great distress and starvation severe measures recently taken by the Company against smuggling."[2] He emphasized the distinctions drawn by the Brassmen between the Company's officials and those of the Protectorate, and expressed surprise not only of Flint having ignored the warning of 27th but also "considering the turbulent nature of the tribes", the general defenceless state of Akassa.[3] Goldie accused Macdonald of not wanting to punish the Brassmen for their crimes, of threatening "to wash up (the Company) in the Niger,

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1. F.O. 83/1374 Min. by C.L.H. 9.2.95.
2. F.O. 2/86 Macdonald to F.O. 5.2.95 tel.
3. F.O. 2/83 Macdonald to F.O. 11.2.95.

and of ignoring the threat posed by 'an imperium in imperio' in the Protectorate. He again demanded severe reprisals.[1] Kimberley, however, sensitive to growing pressure in the country, refused to agree. "If Mr. Moor is right, the present position in the Brass River is impossible to justify. The frontier between the Company's territories and the Niger Protectorate is, he maintains, so drawn as to deprive a large population of their trade. He thinks this state of things could be remedied by some agreement as to duties between the Compamy and the Protectorate - no doubt open outrage must be punished, but if a remedy is not at the same time aplied to remove the grievances of the Brass people we shall be liable to just and severe blame."[2] Kimberley determined to wait for a third opinion from Rear Admiral Bedford, then on his way to the Protectorate for the second time within a year, with the entire naval force (except Alecto) of the West Africa Station.

Bedford arrived on 9th, and, naturally reluctant to hazard his forces up river, soon found himself in agrement with Macdonald that every effort should be made to induce the Brassmen to surrender

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1. R.N.C. papers IV Goldie to Scarbrough, 7.2.95.
2. F.O. 83/1374 Goldie to Kimberley, 8.2.95. Min. on.

peacefully. Meamwhile an attempt was made to gain time. Macdonald telegraphed home that he doubted whether the punishment of burning villages, the only one possible, would improve the situation. On 13th, admidst feverish communication with Nembe pointing out the futility of resistance, Macdonald telegraphed again asking that the Brassmen might not be punished until their case had been enquired into.[1] Sensing the reasons for the Commissioner's prevarication, Kimberley gave Macdonald a framework with which to work: "I need hardly say I could not approve any measure of extreme severity but adequate reparation must be exacted. This might be restoration of plunder, payment of reasonable fines and surrender of arms and war canoes. On these conditions remedy of just grievances might be considered."[2] The Brassmen were now however desperate and refused to surrender their arms unless they were allowed to trade in the Niger. This the Commissioner was unable to guarantee, and it was with barely concealed disappointment that he reported the mounting of a punitive expedition.[3]

Whilst reconnoitring was going on, Macdonald persisted in his efforts at negogiations. These

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1. F.O. 2/86 Macdonald to F.O. 13.2.95. The communications with Brass are contained in 2/83 Macdonald to F.O. 28.2.96.
2. F.O. 2/86 Kimberley to Macdonald, 14.2.96.
3. F.O. 2/86 Macdonald to F.O. 18.2.96.

finally foundered when news was received that the creeks were being blocked, and stockades made and mounted with guns. At daybreak on 22nd February the Admiral issued orders for a general advance on Nembe. The Brassmen fiercely contested the advance of the expedition, but by mid afternoon Nembe was in flames, and preparations were made for an assault on Bassambri. Having lost five men, however, the Admiral concluded "that the punishment inflicted on the Chiefs and people... was sufficient, and a retreat was decided upon."[1]. During the next two days Fishtown, Twon and surrounding villages were occupied, gun stockades and the houses of chiefs being blown up. On the orders of the Commissioner "the houses and plantations of the poor people were left standing."[1] The light punishment by contemporary standards reflected the sympathies of both Admiral and Commissioner for the Brassmen's case. Hardly any of the loot taken at Akassa had been recovered, nor had the Brass people been forced to disgorge their rifles. If the punishment was limited the indirect results were not. Hunger combined with small pox began to decimate the refugee population

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1. F.O. 2/83 Macdonald to F.O. 28.2.96.

in the bush, creating the utmost distress in the Protectorate. This as much as anything else induced the Brass Chiefs to offer the surrender of war canoes, cannon and such loot as remained; to throw themselves on the Queen's mercy and "humbly request an enquiry"[1]

To Goldie, sitting comfortably in London, Macdonald's policy of demanding the opening of the Niger markets, while the Brassmen retained their rifles, smacked of capitulation to cannibals. Kimberley was disposed to agree upon that question of rifles, and Macdonald was told that he could accept the terms offered as long as rifles were surrendered as well as cannon.[2] Macdonald was however unwilling to make this demand, knowing that "a native of this part of the world would sooner part, a great deal sooner, with the wife of his buzzum than with his bundork";[3] also that it would require another expedition and more suffering to effect the surrender. Consequently he telegraphed on 26th March that "considering human life more valuable than rifles substituted prisoners for latter." This annoyed Anderson, who thought that no terms should have been spoken of until prisoners were set free.[4] After another interview with Goldie, the Foreign Office demanded the surrender of rifles

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1. F.O. 2/86 Macdonald to F.O. 10.3.95.
2. F.O. 2/86 F.O. to Macdonald, 11.3.95
3. F.O. 2/83 Macdonald to Hill, 26.3.95.
4. F.O. 2/86. Macdonald to F.O. 24.3.95. Min. by H.P.A.

as a preliminary to enquiry.[1]

According to Lugard, Macdonald was "wild" at the order and talked of resigning.[2] Whether this was true or not, the Commissioner certainly thought his present position impossible. The last straw was the arrival of the mail on the coast containing cuttings of articles written by Goldie, in particular one to the 'Times' in which he had in thinly veiled terms accused Macdonald of hypocrisy for supporting the Brassmen in view of the way that the coast officers had themselves dealt with middlemen like Nana and Ja Ja.[3] Macdonald's answer exploded through the Foreign Office.

> "Ja Ja was deported (and very rightly) by H.H. Johnston because he was a big monopolist and threatened to become a bigger. Nana was knocked endways by Moor and the gun boats for the very same reason, and now we have wiped the floor with the Brassmen because they have endeavoured to go for the biggest monopolist of the crowd - the Royal Niger Company. As I daresay you are aware, in the vast territories of the Niger Company there is not one single outside trader, black, white, green or yellow. The markets are all theirs. They can open or shut any given market at will, which means subsistence or starvation to the native inhabitants of the place. They can offer any price they like to the producers and the latter must either take or starve. And why, in Heaven's name, why? Because they (the Company) must pay their 6 or 7 per cent to shareholders."[4]

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1. F.O. 2/86 F.O. to Macdonald, 26.3.95. Tel.
2. Lugard Diary Vol. IV 22.3.95.
3. The Times, 4.2.95.
4. F.O. 2/83 Macdonald to Hill 26.3.95. P. The letter was made semi official by printing.

In addressing his superiors thus, and hazarding his career, no one could question the Commissioner"s courage, integrity and humanity. Certainly he continued to act, as Lugard had suggested, as though he felt he was burning his boats. Regarding the rifles, Macdonald only agreed to endeavour to carry out the official orders if he could have the assistance of the Admiralty.[1] This was a clever move, in the sense that he was well aware that Bedford would dislike the idea of another expedition. The Admiral's response was not disappointing. He protested about the "new conditions", blaming the Niger Company for provoking disturbances owing to neglect of ordinary precautions.[2] In face of this united front the resolution of the Foreign Office began to waver. Macdonald was informed that Her Majesty's Government placed full reliance on his judgement but "how, if arms are not surrendered... will...natives.....be made to understand that reparation for massacre of prisoners and accompanying atrocities must precede consideration of alleged grievances."[3]

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1. F.O. 2/86 Macdonald to F.O. 27.3.95.
2. F.O. 83/1376 Admiralty to F.O. 29.3.95; also 1377 Admiralty to F.O. 8.4.95.
3. F.O. 2/86 F.O. to Macdonald, 5.4.95.

Sensing the retreat of the Foreign Office, Macdonald hammered home his advantage in a passionate appeal. "Brass people thoroughly understand that reparation has been and is being made for past offences; canoes, cannon, prisoners and plunder surrendered; those chiefs who committed atrocities fined; trade almost ruined; towns destroyed; hundreds killed; women and children starving in bush; small-pox rife; rainy season commencing. I have visited towns destroyed and seen all this. In name of humanity, strongly deprecate further punishment and request settlement of question. S.N.O. entirely concurs."[1]

At this deeply moving appeal, Kimberley capitulated completely. For the first time, Goldie found himself outmanoeuvred on a point which he regarded as essential. Macdonald earned himself a mild censure for not having reported the distress earlier, but was authorized to reopen trade and alleviate suffering. Under the circumstances a commissioner would be sent out as soon as possible to investigate the entire question.[2]

This concession to the growing pressure in Parliament and the press went a long way towards pacifying the Brassmen. The chiefs announced their

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1. F.O. 2/86 Macdonald to F.O. 9.4.85.

2. F.O. 2/86 Kimberley to Macdonald 10.4.95.

willingness to co-operate with Macdonald in returning loot, and agreed to pay a fine of £516 to compensate the dependents of the victims of Akassa. The Commissioner evaded the demand for the judicial trial of individuals by pleading the national nature of the movement. The apparent insensibility of both Macdonald and the critics of the Company in Parliament to cannibalism puzzled the Foreign Office. The Commissioner dismissed it as "a form of sacrifice which their forefathers have practised from time immemorial." Kimberley did not regard this "quasi apology" with "much edification" and was not "particularly pleased" with Macdonald's way "of treating this affair."[1]

Still less was Goldie. The appointment of a commissioner represented a setback to the Company, whose position was clear that there was nothing to investigate. Goldie denied that the Brassmen were in any distress whatever, harped on the dangers of their being allowed to retain their rifles and reiterated all the old charges concerning smuggling.[2] The allegations were clearly aimed at getting up a case for the Commissioner before he left for the coast. The rivalry of the Protectorate and Company was paralllelled locally. Correspondence was barely polite,

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1. F.O. 2/83 Macdonald to F.O. 1.5.95. Mins. On.
2. F.O. 83/1377 R.N.C. to F.O. 11.4.95 and 17.4.95.

and it could not have been entirely inadvertence on Goldie's part which permitted a passage in one of Wallace's letters to be transmitted to the Foreign Office uncensored calling for the dismissal of Macdonald as a man "utterly unfit for the position he holds."[1] In such an atmosphere, in which fruitful negotiations between Company and Consul were next to impossible, the decisions and recommendations of an impartial commissioner assumed a new importance. The Foreign Office looked forward to the report with eagerness.

The man chosen to undertake the enquiry was Sir John Kirk, sometime Consul General at Zanzibar, also a director of the East Africa Company, which had recently lost its charter. In choosing Kirk, the government had compromised between selecting a colonial official, who would by his background be prejudiced against the charter principle, and appointing a company official who would be equally biassed in the opposite direction. The care thus taken in selection was evidence of the high importance attached to the enquiry. Both the Prime Minister and the Chancellor of the Exchequer saw Kirk's instructions

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1. F.O. 83/1382 Kirk to Salisbury 25.8.95. Inc. Wallace to Council R.N.C. 17.4.95.

before they were despatched by Kimberley. These instructions took the form of a demand for a comprehensive enquiry into the Niger Company's administration with emphasis on the grievances of the Brassmen. The Foreign Secretary personally indicated that the suggestions for amelioration should include methods by which the Brassmen could trade in the Niger, and ways by which a joint customs administration could be set up.[1] The inquiry therefore clearly envisaged the end of the Company's monopoly.

Kirk conducted his inquiry with commendable celerity. Arriving at Lagos on 6th June, in a fortnight he had completed his investigation at Brass, Akassa and in the Forcados. By 30th June he was on his way home. His report took eight weeks to compose and was in the hands of Salisbury, back as Foreign Secretary after the June election, by the end of August. The speed with which the enquiry was conducted did not forestall rumours or allay fears. One of the most persistent of these, because it was known to be advocated by Goldie himself, was the transfer of the Brassmen to the Company. This would have enabled the former to trade freely in the Company's territories, but the very prospect raised a storm of enquiries at the Foreign

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1. F.O. 83/1378. Kimberley to Kirk, 6.5.95.

Office during August.[1] Critics in the Commons wanted the report to be laid.[2] This, as with the Macdonald report, the government refused to do.[3]

There were good reasons why the government wished to keep the report secret. Kirk had proposed much more fundamental reforms than a mere transfer of territory. These arose out of the conclusions he had drawn from the information he had received on the coast. His enquiry exonerated the Brassmen in some measure from blame. That they smuggled was undoubtedly true, but they needed to in order to conduct a profitable trade. It exonerated the Company, whose regulations, if harsh, were approved by the Government at home, and who were therefore justified in using force to uphold their regulations. It exonerated the Protectorate government which, faced with a rapidly deteriorating situation at Brass about which they could do nothing, had been unable to exercise sufficient authority to prevent smuggling. If there were a villain of the piece, it was the British Government, which had allowed all these things to

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1. E.g. F.O. 83/1381 Oil Rivers Trading Co. to F.O. 14.8.95, 1382 Liverpool Chamber of Commerce to F.O. 27.8.95.

2. F.O. 83/1382 Dilke, Baden Powell, Lawrence.

3. The Report was, in fact, laid in 1896 but in such a butchered form as to make it virtually worthless as a factual document. 1896 Vol. LIX C 7977.

happen, and had failed to comprehend the impossibility of having two different fiscal administrations in the delta. Responsibility had evidently come home to roost.

But Kirk was not concerned to apportion praise or blame. This was too negative. To remedy the revealed defects, he proposed two schemes - the one, a partial scheme of reform, the other a general and radical proposal to alter the whole pattern of government in the Niger territories. The first partial scheme was a variation of the Liverpool proposal of 1892 that the delta south of Onitsha should be handed over to the Protectorate. Kirk did not propose to remove the delta area from the control of the Company, but to combine it in a customs union with the Protectorate. This would substitute the fiscal boundaries on either side of the Niger for one at the head of the delta, the Company's territories north of this point being governed as heretofore. In the delta area licenses would be abolished and free trade allowed. The common tariff needed would be a compromise between the high rates of the Company and the low rates of the Protectorate, with the exception of the duty on spirits, which would be raised to 4/-. The revenue from customs Kirk estimated would yield £450,000, which would be split

equally between the two administrations. Two objections Kirk saw to a partial scheme; the Company would still continue to trade - a source of potential friction in an area of free competition; and the illogicality of halting the free trade frontier at the head of the delta.

It was a full reorganisation therefore that Kirk favoured as being easier to achieve in the long run. The basis of this proposal was that the Company should cease trading completely and become a purely administrative organization to prepare the way for British rule. A customs union, a common tariff and system of taxation would be established between the whole of the Company's territories and the Coast Protectorate. The two divisions of the British Protectorate would be treated financially as one with a common fund. The eventual aim of this reorganisation was to pave the way for direct control as a Crown Colony.[1]

The change of government in June 1895 was not a good omen for the implementation of the Kirk report. For the first time it brought to the Colonial Office a man, Joseph Chamberlain, who had his

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1. F.O. 83/1382 Kirk to Salisbury 25.8.95. Kirk elaborates in detail the necessary reorganization of the Company. Flint, Goldie pp. 210-212.

own ideas as to how the imperial estates should be run. We have already seen how officials in the Colonial Office were beginning to develop a greater interest in the British territories outside their control. Their interest was under the new Colonial Secretary, given an impetus and a direction which gradually emerged as a coherent ideology. Government, in the person of Chamberlain, who held a position of real power in the Cabinet, was now prepared to invest both money and men in Africa. The Foreign Office was faced with increasing pressure from the Colonial Office to decide the future of the Niger Territories once and for all. It was clear that no discussions on the Kirk report could take place without the major participation of the Colonial Secretary.

Company attitudes were altering too. Dr. Flint ably analyzes how Goldie "began to tire of the crude profit of his now perfect monopoly", and demonstrates his increasing concern with politics and administration. Undoubtedly, he realized the threat to which his Company was now exposed from the Colonial Office. Broadly aware of the Kirk proposals,[1] he became their most ardent advocate in a desperate bid for a settlement before Chamberlain could get his grip

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1. Flint "Goldie", p. 197.

on the reins. Salisbury, however, refused to be hurried, and it was not until December 7th that Goldie succeeded in gaining a personal interview with the Prime Minister. Unable to force government's hand he adopted a new tack. It was nothing less than a revival of the charter extension plans of 1889-90. Negotiations were undertaken between Jones, representing the shipping lines, Holt from the African Association, and Goldie himself. Goldie was to run the administration in London, commercial affairs would be directed by Holt, and it was hoped to give the plan respectability by persuading Macdonald to act as Governor. It was Jones who informed Macdonald, who reacted at once by denouncing such "unholy designs" to Anderson.[1] Anderson agreed the idea was "not worthy of discussion":[2] Goldie "must know that he was talking nonsense".[3] The Under Secretary reflected the mood of Salisbury, who was content to await the opinionsof his masterful colleague. Over Christmas prolonged discussions were held between Chamberlain and the Prime Minister. The outcome was revealed in a curt note from Barrington to Goldie on 3rd January 1896 to the effect that the Kirk

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1. F.O. 2/85 Confidential Memo. by Macdonald, 13.11.95.
2. Ibid. Min. by H.P.A. 13.11.95.
3. F.O. 83/1385 Memo. by H.P.A. 20.11.95.

scheme "would be absolutely unacceptable to Parliament."[1]

That action did not follow immediately on what amounted to a decision forcing both Company and Consul under the Colonial Office was due not to any lack of conviction on a matter of principle, but to a lack of opportunity as the crisis with France over both Niger and Nile began to assume alarming proportions. As it was, the decision not to implement the Kirk report, or to act quickly, as a consequence produced an intolerable position in the Niger Territories. The unreformed Company was left to fight on for four more years, burdened by increasing pressure from the north, its forces committed to maintaining a fiscal system in the delta which had been shown to be harsh. The Protectorate struggled on, its administration in constant dispute with the Company on the boundaries, its traders still cut out from the Niger. Above all the Brassmen, whose attack on Akassa had first brought the Niger situation to effective public notice, betrayed at the last by the Queen's Government in whom they had trusted, continued to suffer the undeserving fate of being the wrong side of the Imperial Boundary.

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1. F.O. 83/1440 Barrington to Goldie, 3.1.96.

It was not long before the dreary round of charge and counter charge, which Kirk had done his best to settle, began to appear again in the correspondence.[1]

The activity of the Colonial Office began to have its impact on the administration of the Protectorate. For the first time the Foreign Office realized how much freedom the Consul General had had to decide and order policy. While the Protectorate was not, as it were, in the news, and the Colonial Office was quiescent, there had been little incentive to interfere in the administration, which caused no trouble and was completely self supporting. But within the space of a year the Protectorate had been involved in two crises which had involved the intervention of the entire Imperial naval force on the west coast. On neither occasion was the Consul General in a position to stop such crises developing. In the Nana dispute Macdonald's subordinate had precipitated a conflict to which the Government was a spectator; the Brass affair had developed over the years and was beyond the power of the consul general to solve.

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1. E.g. F.O. 83/1383 R.N.C. to F.O. 5.9.95. 2/84 Macdonald to F.O. 13.9.95. During 1896 some effort was made at local agreement between Moor and Goldie to benefit Brass, 2/100 passim the Protectorate paid the Company £20,000 in compensation for the attack Nov. 1897. C.O. 464/1 q.v.

Clearly the time had now come to tighten government control over the administration.

The resignation from the Protectorate Agency of Sir Alfred Jephson provided the opportunity to begin with finance. The necessary financial control was to be secured by the turning over of the agency business to the Crown Agents for the Colonies, who would be the responsible body for the accounts - a proposal Chamberlain was only too willing to entertain.[1] Arrangements were quickly made, and, by 1st February 1896, were complete. The treasurer was relieved of all expenditure and from the necessity of keeping a banking account, and was reduced to a subordinate role of receiving and examining accounts and preparing balance sheets and estimates. This new system, it was hoped, would prevent such scandals as the unauthorized expenditure of £53,000 on 'Ivy'.[2]

In turning the material side of the Protectorate over to the Crown Agents, the Foreign Office could hardly have been unaware that they were paving the way for the peaceful takeover of the Protectorate by the Colonial Office. Yet March 1896 still found

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1. F.O. 83/1386 Crown Agents to F.O. 9.12.95.
2. F.O. 83/1387 Ommaney to Hill, 23.12.95.

the Foreign Office denying that any such step was being contemplated.[1] An awkward system of triangular correspondence developed, with the Foreign Office writing to the Crown Agents, and Crown Agents replying, then the matter in hand being referred to the Colonial Office and that office replying direct to the Foreign Secretary. There was not a dissenting voice in the Colonial Office now to the question of the transfer of the Protectorate. Read, the young head of the West Coast Department, expressed the general consensus when he wrote "I doubt whether the F.O. saves itself much work by keeping the N.C.P., for either they consult us and give us as much trouble as if we had the whole thing in our hands....or else they don't consult us and strike out a new line of their own, so that when the N.C.P is transferred to the C.O. there will be endless trouble with regard to vested rights etc.... the evils of having Lagos under one control and the N.C.P. and R.N.C. under another are being felt in (all) directions...." Chamberlain agreed,[2] but it was not until the end of 1898 that a joint committee to decide the future of the territories at last met. From it the

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1. F.O. 83/1442 Reply to Dilke, M.P. 19.3.06.

2. C.O. 147/109 F.O. to C.O. 14.8.96. Mins on.

two Protectorates of Southern and Northern Nigeria were born.

The latter part of 1895 saw Macdonald busy at work on the orders of the Foreign Office initiating the new course of the administration. This involved the drawing up of elaborate rules regarding employment, finance and estimates in concert with the Crown Agents. At the centre however, was the political reorganization of the Protectorate. This again reflected the growing influence of the Colonial Office with the reduction in the number of senior officers, and the renaming of the junior officers, District Commissioners, and Assistant District Commissioners. The number of districts was reduced to three, the Eastern comprising the Protectorate east of the Qua Ibo, the Central consisting of the Opobo, Bonny, New Calabar and Brass Vice Consulates, and the Western which took in the whole Protectorate on the west of the delta. Both the last two were to be in the charge of a Vice Consul, the Eastern to be under a Consul who would take over from the Consul General in his absence. Assisting the senior officers were four District Commissioners and 13 Assistant District Commissioners. As Macdonald explained, this arrangement involved no increase in the establishment, nor, since no new Vice Consuls had been appointed since 1894,

would it involve any demotions. Moor was to be the new Consul General, Crawford in charge of the Central and Gallwey in charge of the western districts. As Moor's deputy, an officer seconded from the Gold Coast, Phillips, was appointed. The appointment of Phillips naturally stiffened the "official" element in the administration.[1] The reorganization was the first step towards dividing the territory into artificial units cutting across the traditional divisions.

The new administrative regime was inaugurated in a series of despatches during the early part of 1896. Moor was informed amongst other things that his estimates must not be exceeded without special sanction, that all vacancies in the European staff were to be reported, and no appointments made without the approval of the Secretary of State, that he was to undertake no punitive expeditions without approval, and that he was to be governed at all times by the rules drawn up by Macdonald in concert with the Crown Agents. The Protectorate had evidently ceased to be a one man show.[2]

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1. F.O. 2/85 Macdonald to F.O. 19.12.95. For appointments see 2/100 Moor to F.O. 9.2.96.

2. See F.O. 2/99 various particularly F.O. to Moor 3.1.96.

A new course was evident in the Protectorate as well. It was clear that, under Moor, the periods of peace were likely to become shorter and shorter. Moor had not the temperament to try all peaceful means before resorting to force. Macdonald had hardly left the Protectorate in July, 1895, before Moor was off up the Cross River destroying towns "not wheeling into line at all" - their offence being to interrupt trade. Benin as well caught the Acting Commissioner's eye. "Should we succeed in getting an invite" he argued "will take full advantage of it and act like Soapy Sponge - Once we get in he'll find it hard to get rid of us again."[1] This activity alarmed Hill, who thought it "unfortunate that most of the expeditions are marked by shelling and burning."[2] Macdonald too, was at a loss to understand why there should be disturbances, as in most of the towns mentioned by Moor he (Macdonald) "was hospitably and well received."[3]

Anderson was definite that Macdonald was not going to work the new system.[4] It was asking too

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1. F.O. 2/85 Moor to Macdonald, 9.10.95 P.
2. F.O. 2/85 Macdonald to F.O. 26.10.95.
3. F.O. 2/85 Macdonald to F.O. 26.10.95.
4. F.O. 83/1386 Min. by H.P.A. 28.11.95.

much to expect the man responsible for operating the hitherto flexible system, to succeed in divesting himself of so much authority in the now strait-waistcoated Protectorate. Moreover there were other factors to be considered. Macdonald had never been able to work with Goldie; their relationship had reached a personal low in 1895. Since there was no prospect of shifting Goldie, or of a speedy end to the Niger Company, the only way to ease relations between the two Protectorates was to shift Macdonald. Macdonald's new appointment in January 1896 reflected the confidence in his ability entertained by Salisbury, and a recognition of his success in the Protectorate. His talents carried him into the higher echelons of the diplomatic service as Ambassador at Peking on a salary of £6,000 per year. It was the very reverse of a slight, and enabled the ex-Commissioner to scale far greater heights than he could ever have done on the Bights of Benin and Biafra.

CHAPTER ELEVEN.

CONCLUSION.

Macdonald's elevation to Peking at the beginning of 1896 marked the end of the period of experiment in the Oil Rivers. From now on the Protectorate was to follow more othodox courses, leading eventually into the fond embrace of the Colonial Office system. Yet if the Foreign Office Protectorate system was the child of expediency, which could not last, during the brief summer of its operation it proved, on the Niger Coast, at any rate, a remarkably efficient means of ruling peoples who, in the peculiar power structures created during the early partition period, were neither foreign nor subject. More than anything else the system provided a protective umbrella for the Colonial Office, to find its bearings, before hatching the egg of colonial rule. One is not here concerned with the morality or otherwise of colonial rule of one more powerful people subjecting another to its authority. The fact remains it was the breakdown of indigenous authority on the west coast brought about largely by the erosive contact with European commerce which drew the British to fill an increasing power vacuum. The peoples lost

their authority without realizing at what stage they had lost what. After 1885 the British set about building a new system of government, albeit haphazardly, containing elements indigenous and European, to replace the old. The first six years were spent in arguing how this was to be done. As a result of an independent investigation on the Niger one man was charged to carry out his own ideas in 1891. This he proceeded to do and succeeded in stamping his own personality unalterably on the Rivers.

Macdonald's ideas long outlasted his appointment as Commissioner, despite their temporary reversal by Moor. For in the long run he proved that more could be achieved by persuasion, and by a slow process of evolution from traditional rule than by force. This was the lesson applied by Lugard and all subsequent administrators in Nigeria. But there was a vital difference between Macdonald and those who came later. Macdonald was a Victorian through and through. He believed both in the superiority of western civilisation, and the necessity for change. He was, therefore, no indirect ruler committed to preserving African institutions for their own sake, but a man who believed that the people could be persuaded by an influence, more or less despotic, to

adopt western ways into their own culture, stripped of its barbarities, and raise themselves in the plane of civilization. If his assumptions as to the superiority of western civilization may now be questioned, he was clearly far more of a realist than the indirect rulers in postulating that, come what might, the people were avid for western technology and would eventually govern themselves on western rather than African lines.

Macdonald's policy struck a chord in that great intellectual precursor of the African nationalist movement, Edward Wilmot Blyden, who believed above all else in the co-operation of the races for development and progress: "We must enlist the help of the Europeans, but not to Europeanize ourselves,"[1] he wrote to Governor Pope Hennessy. Blyden saw in Macdonald just such a European helper:

> "Sir Claude Macdonald.....has performed his difficult task with admirable ability. He has in that short time created a revenue, which more than suffices for the work of administration. He has abolished barbarous customs and suppressed marauding practices. The natives, he has discovered, have a perfect knowledge and appreciation of the immense industrial resources of their country, and a readiness to take advantage of them, together with an aptitude for imitation and a desire for instruction which are most hopeful indications of progress..... The progress

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1. E.W. Blyden 'The West African University' Freetown, 1872.

> has been rapid as well as steady; and may be measured from month to month, almost from year to year." [1]

Progress, then, was the keynote of the Macdonald administration. This was the sole justification for the imposition of alien rule - that by it, the social, cultural and material conditions of the ruled might be improved. This philosophy included the punitive expedition as an extraordinary, not an ordinary, instrument of government. Until 1894 by temperament patience and tact Macdonald had achieved his ends with the minimum friction. Subsequent events showed how far this was due to his personality and how easy it was to disturb the balance of peace within the Protectorate., He was fully aware of the natural opposition to the peaceful imposition of the new order, of the tenacity of such customs as slavery, and human sacrifice. It was his task to make sure that he did not provoke this opposition to the surface. This sometimes led him onto lonely eminences of isolation as far as his fellow countrymen were concerned. It was not easy to defend the drink traffic, cannubalism, or for that matter the plundering of the Brass traders.

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1. E.W. Blyden: 'The African Problem' North American Review, Sept. 1895.

Such defences smacked of casuistry to the attackers, an alien concept to a fundamentally honest man. Yet Macdonald was only led into these courses because he believed that these customs, although he found them personally repugnant, acted as a social cement in society. Solid progress was not to be achieved by superficial acts of legislation which looked good on paper. Macdonald therefore only really took issue with his critics on a question of time not of principle. Above all, his humanity objected to what could only be enforced by force.

Behind his administration lay the investigation of 1889 and the report of 1890. It is here that one finds the genesis of his ideas - the attack, for instance, on the concept implicit in chartered company rule, that profits for British interests were synonymous with the interests of the indigenous inhabitants; or that the just interests of the inhabitants must always give way before the demands of the European. Macdonald's final recommendation of a vigorous administration undertaking pioneer development without the cumbersome machinery of a Crown Colony cast aside with contempt the previous attitudes of reluctance on the part of government to accept responsibility. This reluctance had by 1889 created an impossible situation in the rivers, a mess of government. All that was now

to end. The new regime, taxing the liquor trade, but keeping trade open to all, would have a large enough revenue to really govern.

1890 therefore marks a real turning point in the history of late Victorian imperialism. For the first time an instrument of government's reluctance to assume burdens, the chartered company, was investigated, assessed impartially and found wanting. From then on the system itself was on the defensive. Macdonald stated clearly that the government of large areas was not the province of private enterprise.

It was not his fault that government accepted his recommendations with regard to the administration of the new area, while rejecting his proposals to reform the Company. The acceptance of only half the report was responsible for most of the subsequent difficulties in the Oil Rivers, leading to the tragedy of the Brassmen. Government's attitude was understandable. Goldie was fulfilling a vital imperial mission of holding the Niger against France. To destroy the monopoly was to destroy the Charter, and Government was not yet ready to undertake the burden of ruling so vast a territory. But let Goldie cease to fulfil his imperial mission through lack of resources or otherwise, and his raison d'etre would go.

This happened in 1898, and in less than two years the Company lost its charter. But in 1895 the competing claims of the Protectorate to fulfil an imperial mission were already weakening the Company's case. In fact, from 1890 onwards, the Company, forced on the defensive, was merely a necessary evil, tolerated without being loved. The impossibility of Government escaping responsibility by delegating to a chartered company was seen to be illusory in theory as well as in practice. After the Macdonald Report there would be no more charters in Africa.

Paradoxically, the administrative system arising out of the part of the report which was accepted was more short lived than the destruction of the chartered company system, arising out of the shelved part of Macdonald's recommendations. The Foreign Office Protectorate, a subtle combination of diplomacy and rule, which was never defined, could not in the long run compete with the office whose job it was to rule subject peoples. And yet such was the success of the Macdonald administration, and the unwillingness of the Colonial Office to undertake direct burdens, that up to 1893 the Foreign Office looked likely to be saddled with the Oil Rivers for the foreseeable future. The attitude of the Colonial

Office began to change, at first slowly, then, with the advent of Chamberlain, at a faster pace. An ageing Prime Minister was in no mood to resist the importunities of his imperious colleague, whose argument that the rule of subject peoples was not within the capacities of the Foreign Office was logically unanswerable. Slowly the unique power exercised by Macdonald was whittled down until, in 1900, the Niger Coast Protectorate was ready to assume its proper place under the Colonial Office. After 1895 the Colonial Office was willing itself to undertake the rule of subject peoples from the beginning, although this did not initially imply the disturbance of existing vested rights in chartered companies or in the Foreign Office in Africa.

Short lived though the administration under Macdonald's control was, it had shown an astonishing virility compared with other territories on the west coast under the Colonial Office. This may have been partly owing to the fact it owed more to common sense than to law. It was not until 1894 that the first ordinances were promulgated in the Protectorate - and it was in 1894 by a peculiar coincidence that things started to go wrong. Certainly from 1894 the Protectorate began to lose that flexibility which had

given it life. Until then all was progress. The revenue of the Protectorate in the first year of the new administration was equal to that of Lagos. By March 1894 the Lagos revenue had gone up 30% on the 1891 figure, that of the Protectorate 100%. This was not all. After thirty years of British rule the Lagos writ scarcely ran to the other side of Lagos Lagoon. No Governor before Carter in 1896 bothered to visit and explore the Benin River, which Lagos claimed as its boundary. It was 1892 before the Colonial Government penetrated beyond Ijebu, a bare fifty miles to the north east, 1914 before the independence of Abeokuta 70 miles to the north was finally extinguished. Within two years of Macdonald's arrival in the Rivers Out- stations were established at Sapele 70 miles, Degema 50 miles and Itu 100 miles inland. Moreover, the Commissioner himself had been the 250 miles up the Cross River as far as the Rapids. The contrast could not have been more extreme.

Unhampered by a growing bureaucracy, or the accoutrements of civilization such as lawyers, and journalists prepared to question every legislative act, Macdonald and his Vice Consuls pushed inland, settling palavers and disputes on a largely ad hoc basis, but bringing government to the people as the

colonial system seemed unable to do. Departments of government, the post office, public works, the customs, followed the consuls in a demonstrable pattern of tutorship to the indigneous inhabitants. It was a system which gave the premium to initiative, but at the same time put a tremendous strain on the individual.

In a sense the administration's assets were also its fundamental weaknesses. The system was too personal, placed too heavy reliance on individual capacity in a climate notoriously unkind to the European. As the Protectorate expanded, it became too big for one man, or even several men, to handle on the old basis. Then, as was inevitable, guide lines had to be laid down and laws made, so that ninety per cent of administration would not require the personal intervention of a senior officer. By 1895 this process had begun, and no one could deny its necessity. The Vice Consuls were becomigg increasingly weighed down by the burden of supervising the details of political administration, and the attention they could give to postal and customs matters was becoming more and more desultory. Macdonald recognised the problem to some extent, by increasing the native staff in the departments; but this in itself was a recognition of the passing of the personal system

and the need for a bureaucracy. Slowly the departments of government were hived off and assumed independent status apart from the political officers. As this, the Colonial system, became more apparent so too did the administration lose its pioneering instinct and expansion into the interior, if not the actual penetration of the hinterland became slower. Government for instance, knew little more about the Urhobo in 1914 than what was contained in Gallwey's despatches of 1892-5.[1] Macdonald's knowledge of the fragmentary nature of the Ibo political system was barely noted under the Lugard regime, which persisted in trying to thrust chiefs on the hapless people.

Nevertheless, the foundations for the future had been solidly laid. The administration, launched in 1891 on £14.000 p.a. was by 1906 paying handsome dividends in the form of trade in excess of £5,000,000 (as against 1½ million in 1891), a large surplus of revenue over expenditure, and an expanded platform on which modern Nigeria was to grow. But the material angle was only one side of the coin. It was Macdonald who placed the responsibility for the administration of this tropical dependency squarely where it belonged - on the shoulders of the imperial government, and not on

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1. See Ikime 'Niger Delta Rivalry' 1969, p.127

those of a private company. In arguing thus, he was activated by the highest motives of humanity - a belief that the people who inhabited the country did not exist solely for the benefit of European exploitation, but had their own independent right to existence. If imperialism was basically a selfish force, it had its noble exponents. Macdonald was one of these, liberal in intention, by belief, and in act, he laboured hard in the cause of justice, peace and tolerance for the people whom he felt bound to serve. It is to be hoped for the state of Nigeria he did not labour in vain.

TABLE 1

REVENUE AND EXPENDITURE 1891-6. £'s STERLING.

	Income	Expenditure	Balance	Total Credit
3.6.91) 31.3.92)	53,411	34,289	19,122	19,122
1.4.92) 31.3.93)	98,322	93,165	5,157	24,279
1.4.93) 31.3.94)	173,605	138,538	35,067	59,346
1.4.94) 31.3.95)	127,574	171,282	-43,708	15,638
1.4.95) 31.3.96)	155,513	145,044	10,469	26,107

CUSTOMS

		% of Rev.
1891-2	51,000	95.5
1892-3	96,692	97.3
1893-4	169,218	97.4
1894-5	117,716	92.2
1895-6	150,106	96.5

TABLE 2.

MAIN HEADS OF EXPENDITURE £'s STERLING

	1893-4	%	1894-5	%	1895-6	%
Cons.Gen.	184	0.1	3,652	2.1	4,255	2.9
Dep. Coms. & V.C.'s	10,416	7.5	12,453	7.3	13,973	9.6
Customs	3,462	2.6	3,866	2.3	5,123	3.5
Treasury	1,420	1.0	2,385	1.4	2,666	1.8
Post Office	1,980	1.4	2,164	1.3	2,369	1.6
Marine	18,534	13.5	39,174	22.9	43,584	30.0
Botanical	1,021	.7	1,183	.7	1,017	.7
N.C.P.	16,294	11.8	17,896	10.4	21,583	14.9
Medical & Sanitary	5,308	3.8	6,729	3.9	7,550	5.2
Transport	13,937	10.1	13,064	7.6	4,221	2.9
Krooboys	12,727	9.2	14,661	8.6	10,243	7.1
Surveyor Gen. & Intell.	3,551	2.6	4,053	2.4	3,909	2.7
Public Works	39,679	28.9	34,334	20.0	10,165	7.0
Others	10,025	7.3	15,668	9.2	14,306	9.9
Total	138,538		171,282		145,044	

TABLE 3.

	1.8.91 to 31.7.92	1.8.92 to 31.7.93	1.4.94 to 31.3.95	1.4.95 to 31.3.96
ports	748,423/12/8	808,044/14/5	739,864/1/6	656,977/18/4
ports	780,139/17/1	967,543/17/9	825,098/11/3	785,605/5/3
tal	1,528,563/9/9	1,775,588/12/2	1,564,962/12/9	1,441,583/3/7
lance	31,716/4/5	159,499/3/4	85,234/9/9	129,427/8/11

TABLE 4.

PRINCIPLE IMPORTS INTO THE N.C.P.

	1891-2		1894-5		
Article	Value	Duty	Value	Duty	Pos
Cotton goods	177,376/16/11		160,590/19/7		1.
Gin and Geneva	81,038/6/2	34,276/4/0	107,704/4/1	61,416/9/0	2.
Hardware & Cutlery	70,365/1/9		55.797/118		3.
Coopers Stores	52,124/13/6		52,732/1/11		4.
Tobacco	48,444/19/8	17,440/5/5	50,321/12/0	16,835/8/6	5.
Rum	34,586/0/3	23,631/7/0	34,325/17/8	29,782/11/3	6.
Guns	29,378,/2/8	4,520/6/6	8,876/9/1	1,860/10/0	17.
Specie	21,231/4/0		31,288/12/1		7.
Beads	16,815/17/10		7,029/13/10		20
Silk goods	16,703/0/4		11,774/9/10		13.
Provisions	15,815/4/9		21,865/10/3		8.
Rice	15,664/16/1		17,526/9/5		10.
Brass & Copperware	14,933/19/4		19,721/18/6		9.
Wearing Apparel	12,193/10/1		11,455/6/9	1,478/16/0	14.
Salt	10,983/6/5	1,261/4/0	12,145/18/9	1,478/16/9	12.
Gunpowder	10,931/14/9	5,298/4/2	8,236/17/3	5,121/8/8	18.
Building materials	10,163/13/5		16,305/5/7		11.
Earthenware	10,041/0/7		6,276/2/11		21.
Other Dutiable	9,322/1/9	1,268/11/9	12,752/14/6	927/17/8	
Other non-Dutiable	84,310/2/		93,136/5/10		
Total	748,423/12/8	87,695/18/10	739,864/1/6	117,423/1/1	

TABLE 5.

PRINCIPLE EXPORTS FROM THE N.C.P.

	1891-2	% of total	1894-5	% of total
Palm Oil	462,859/12/3	58	505,636/13/8	61
Palm Kernels	274,756/18/9	36	295,312/12/0	36
Rubber	15,536/14/8	2	13,281/17/5	1.5
Ebony	1,717/19/7	1	5,458/6/3	1
Ivory	1,023/1/5	1	1,202/4/4	1
Cocoas	308/9/9	1	1,159/11/7	1
Others	23,937/10/8	3	3,047/6/0	0.5
Total	780,139/17/1	100	825,098/11/3	100

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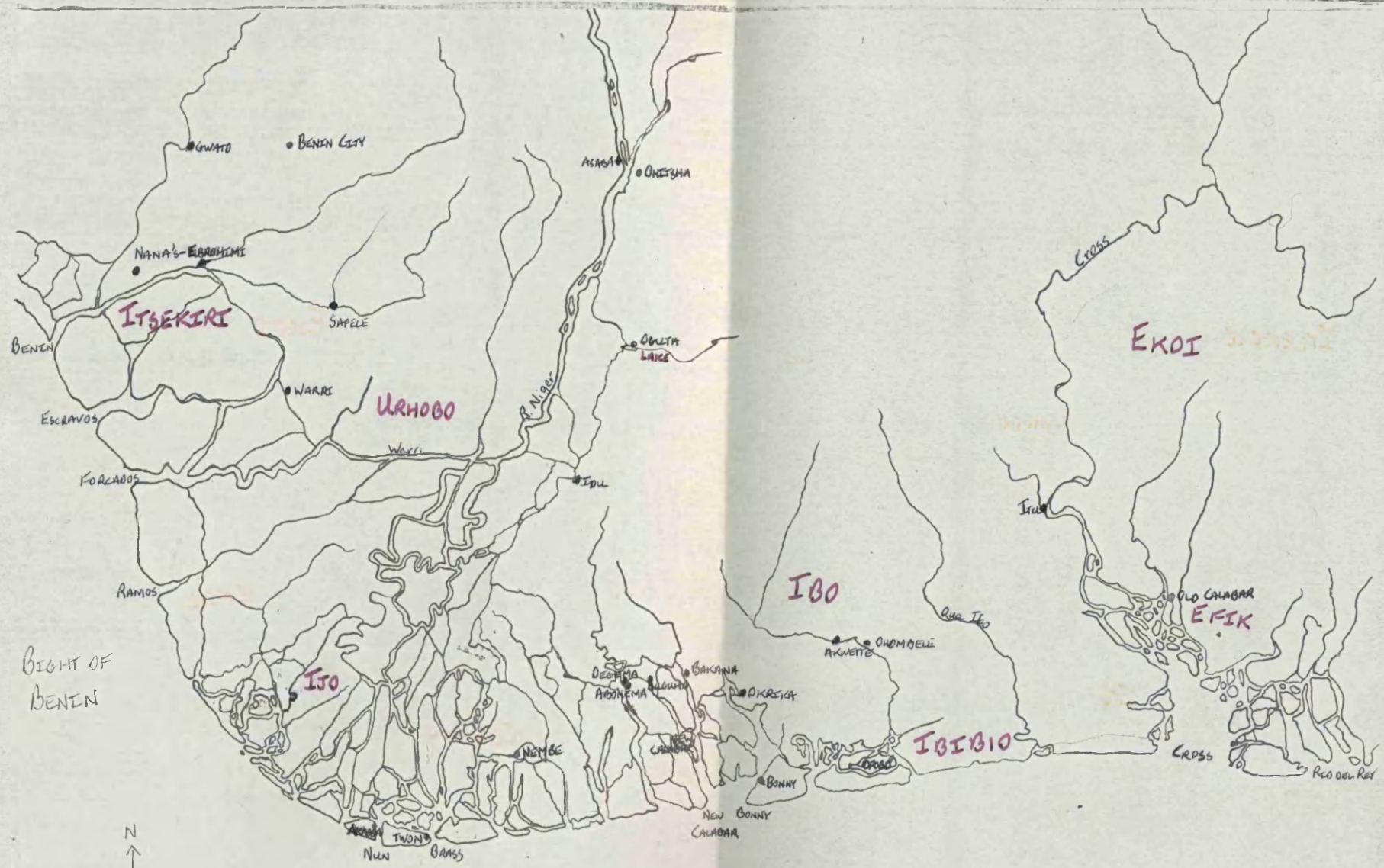
GWATO
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R. NIGER
ESCRAVOS
WARRI
FORCADOS
IDU
RAMOS
IBO
EKOI
CROSS
IJO
BIGHT OF BENIN
OHOMOELE
AKWETTE
OKRIKA
BAKANA
NEMBE
BONNY
IBIBIO
OLD CALABAR
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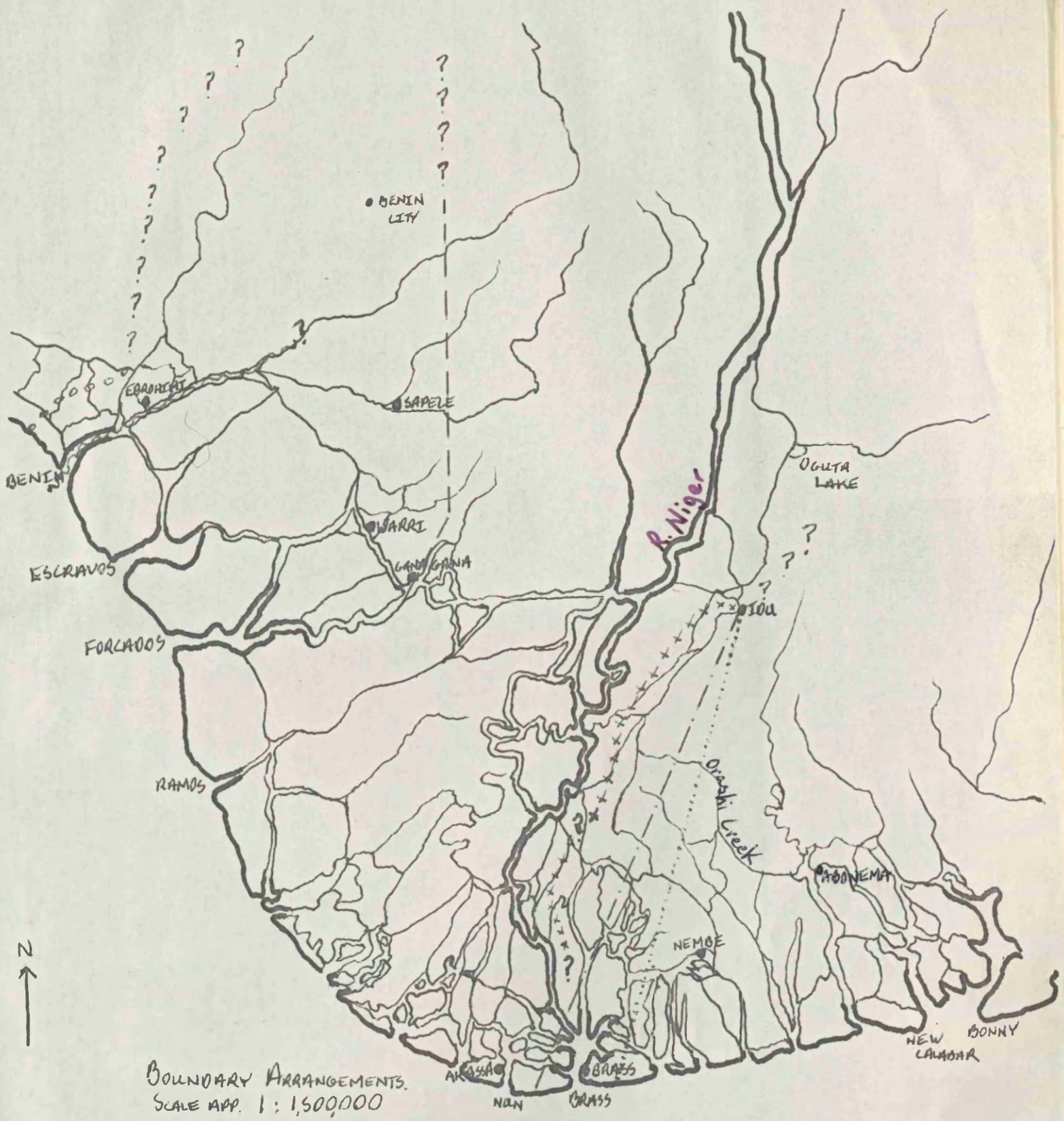
CROSS
RIO DEL REY
NEW CALABAR
NUN
BRASS
N
THE NIGER DELTA AND OIL RIVERS
SCALE 1 : 1 500 000 app 23 miles to 1 inch
BIGHT OF BIAFRA



BOUNDARY ARRANGEMENTS.
SCALE APP. 1 : 1,500,000

KEY

~~~~ LAGOS BOUNDARY 1886 PROCLAMATION

0 0 0 0 1891 LAGOS BOUNDARY ARRANGEMENT

— — — 1891 R.N.C. BOUNDARY ARRANGEMENT WEST

. . . . . 1891 R.N.C. BOUNDARY ARRANGEMENT EAST AS ON JOHNSTONS MAP

— . — . IBID AS IT SHOULD BE

× × × × IBID SHOWING THE NECESSARY DEFLECTIONS

?? TO SECURE 3 MILES BETWEEN THE MAIN NIGER & THE BRASS.
INDICATES UNCERTAIN OR IMPOSSIBLE
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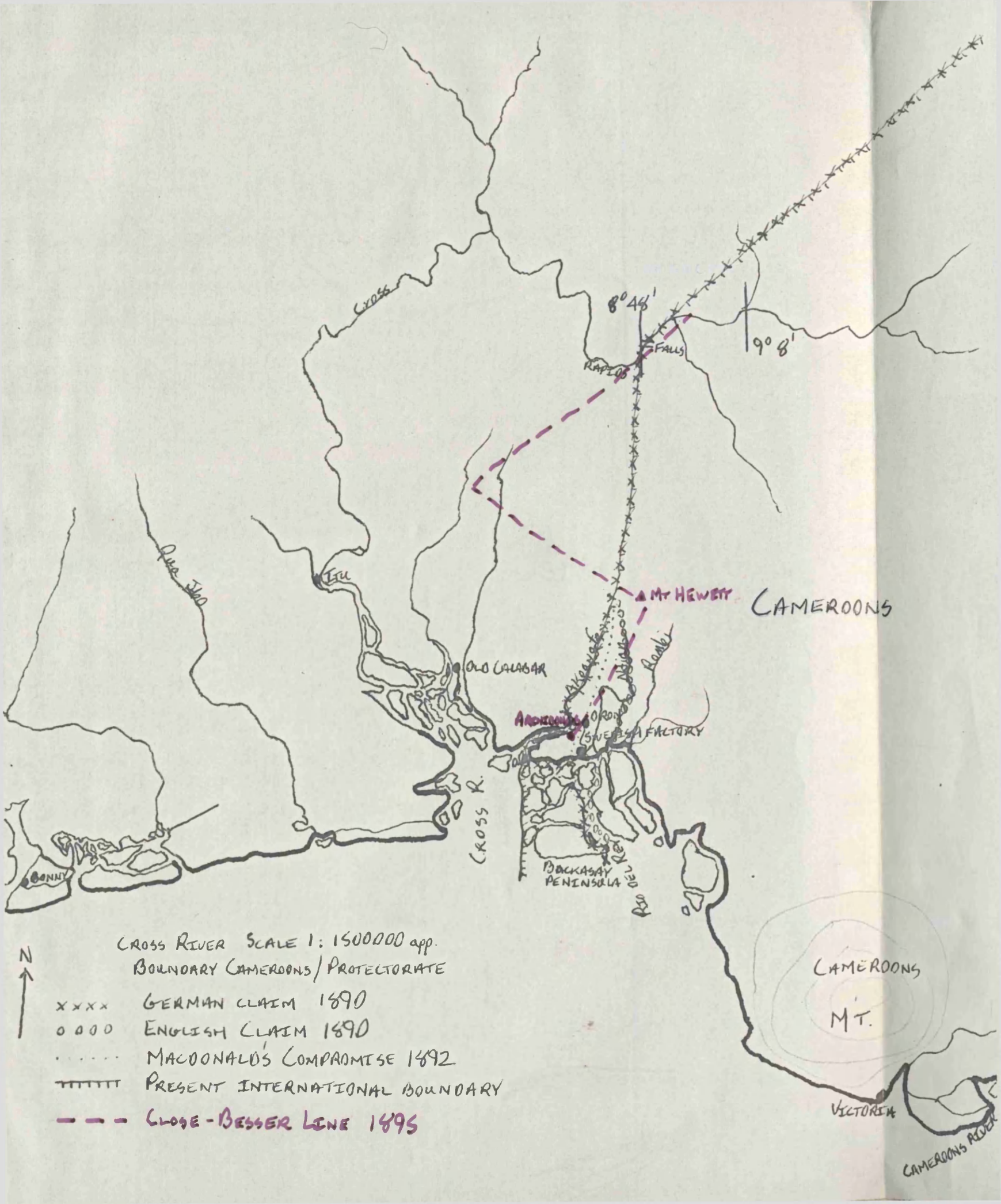
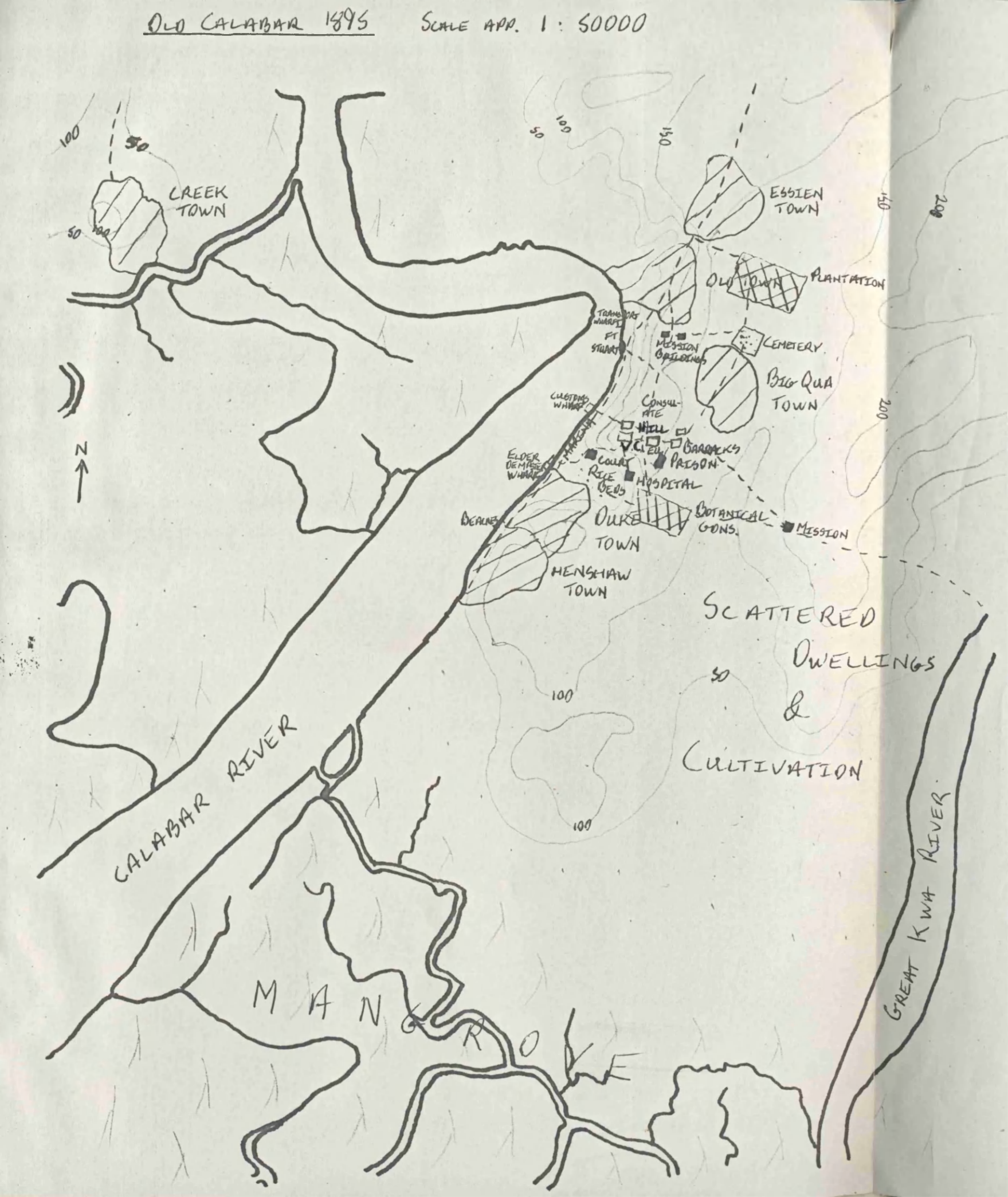

8° 44'
9° 8'
FALLS
RAPIDS
CROSS
ITU
QUA IBOE
MT HEWETT
CAMEROONS
OLD CALABAR
AKWAYAFE
ROAD
SWEDISH FACTORY
CROSS R.
BONNY
BOCKASAY PENINSULA
OLD KOO
CAMEROONS MT.
VICTORIA
CAMEROONS RIVER
N
CROSS RIVER SCALE 1: 1500000 app.
BOUNDARY CAMEROONS / PROTECTORATE
xxxx GERMAN CLAIM 1890
oooo ENGLISH CLAIM 1890
..... MACDONALD'S COMPROMISE 1892
PRESENT INTERNATIONAL BOUNDARY
CLOSE-BESSER LINE 1895


OLD CALABAR 1895
SCALE APP. 1 : 50000
CREEK TOWN
ESSIEN TOWN
OLD TOWN
PLANTATION
CEMETERY
BIG QUA TOWN
TRANSOM WHARF
FT STUART
MISSION BUILDINGS
CUSTOMS WHARF
CONSULATE
HILL
CLUB
BARRACKS
PRISON
ELDER DEMPSTER WHARF
COURT
RICE BEDS
HOSPITAL
DUKE TOWN
BOTANICAL GDNS.
MISSION
HENSHAW TOWN
SCATTERED DWELLINGS & CULTIVATION
CALABAR RIVER
MANGROVE
GREAT KWA RIVER
N
100
50
150
200